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#9 IN A NINE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES
SECRET WARS II
A TIME TO DIE!
AMSL

Beyond time, space, and the myriad dimensions lies another universe to which our own is as a droplet of water to the ocean. The One Who Is All in that other universe has learned of our universe and has come here to walk among us, that he might come to understand the essence of humanity.

The fragile Earth trembles beneath his feet, dreading his godlike omnipotence.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: SECRET WARS™ II

JIM SHOOTER	AL MILGROM	STEVE LEIALOHA	ROSEN & PARKER	M. HANDS	BOB BUDIANSKY
SCRIPTER	PENCILER	INKER	LETTERS	COLORIST	EDITOR

GOD IN MAN, MAN IN GOD!

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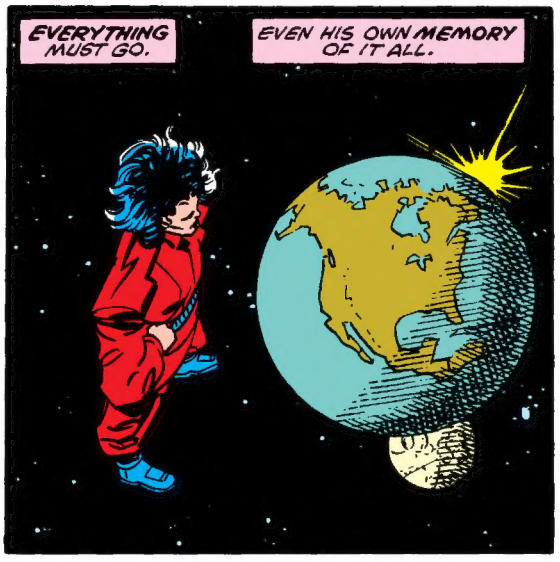
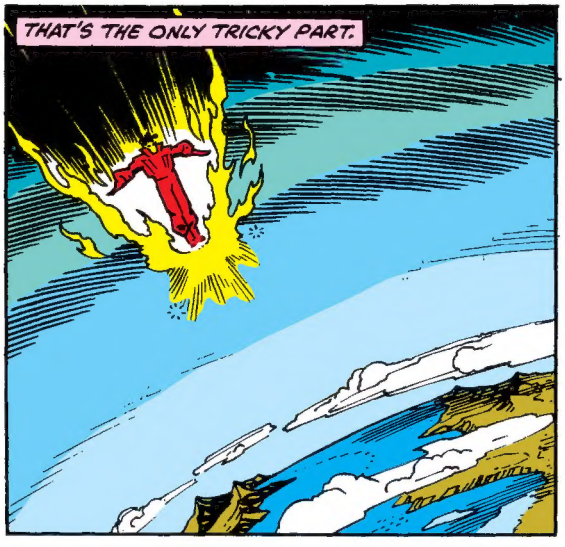
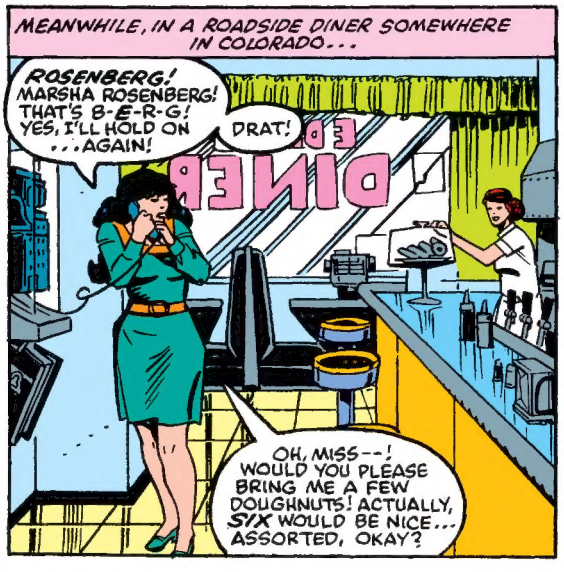
ITS SUBSTANCE, ITS SPACE, ITS DENIZENS, ITS OVERLORDS, ITS CONCEPTUAL BEINGS-- EVEN DEATH ITSELF-- WILL BE ERASED.

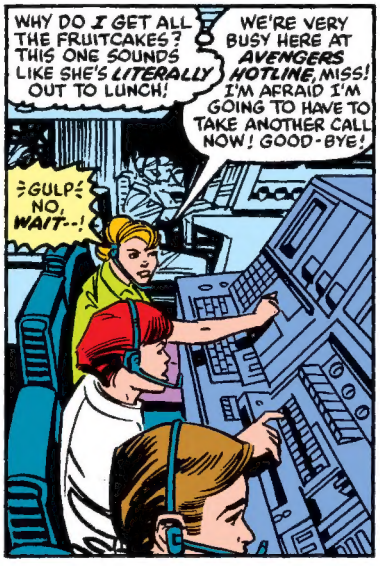

EVERYTHING MUST GO.
EVEN HIS OWN MEMORY OF IT ALL.


THAT'S THE ONLY TRICKY PART.

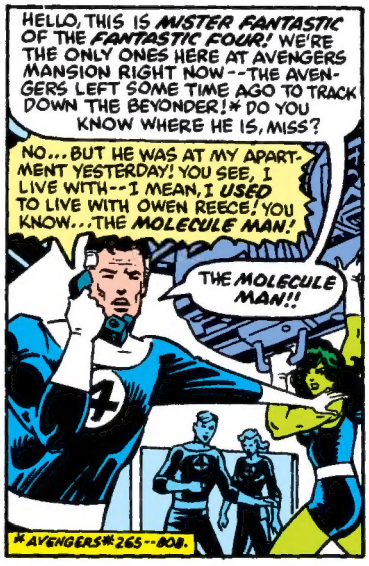
YEP.

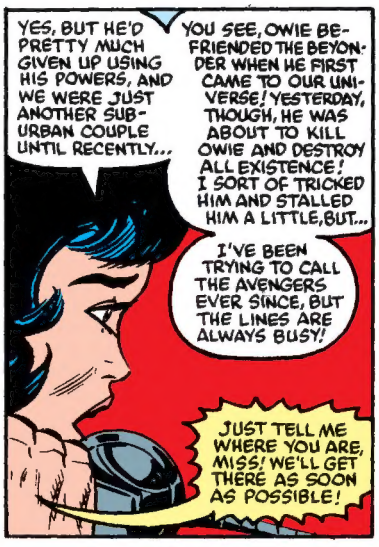

MEANWHILE, IN A ROADSIDE DINER SOMEWHERE IN COLORADO...
ROSENBERG! MARSHA ROSENBERG! THAT'S B-E-R-G! YES, I'LL HOLD ON ...AGAIN!
DRAT!
DINER
OH, MISS--! WOULD YOU PLEASE BRING ME A FEW DOUGHNUTS! ACTUALLY, SIX WOULD BE NICE... ASSORTED, OKAY?

MOMENTS LATER...
MISS ROSENBERG?
÷URGLMPHH÷
I'M SORRY, BUT WE SEEM TO HAVE A BAD CONNECTION!
JUH UH MNN! M'MTH ITH FLL! DNT HNG'P! THTH ITH URGN'!

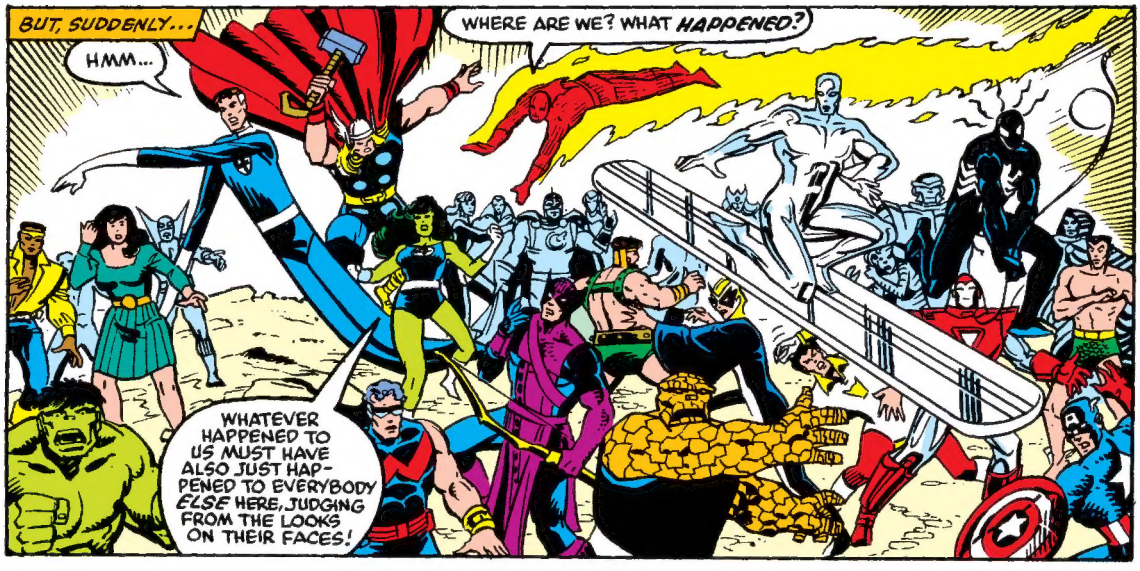

WHY DO I GET ALL THE FRUITCAKES? THIS ONE SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S LITERALLY OUT TO LUNCH!
WE'RE VERY BUSY HERE AT AVENGERS HOTLINE, MISS! I'M AFRAID I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE ANOTHER CALL NOW! GOOD-BYE!
=GULP= NO, WAIT--!

LISTEN TO ME--! I'VE GOT TO TALK TO THE AVENGERS! THE BEYONDER'S ABOUT TO WIPE AWAY THE WHOLE UNIVERSE!
DID YOU SAY... THE BEYONDER? HOLD ON!


HELLO, THIS IS MISTER FANTASTIC OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR! WE'RE THE ONLY ONES HERE AT AVENGERS MANSION RIGHT NOW--THE AVENGERS LEFT SOME TIME AGO TO TRACK DOWN THE BEYONDER! * DO YOU KNOW WHERE HE IS, MISS?
NO... BUT HE WAS AT MY APARTMENT YESTERDAY! YOU SEE, I LIVE WITH--I MEAN, I USED TO LIVE WITH OWEN REECE! YOU KNOW... THE MOLECULE MAN!
THE MOLECULE MAN!!
* AVENGERS #265--DOB.

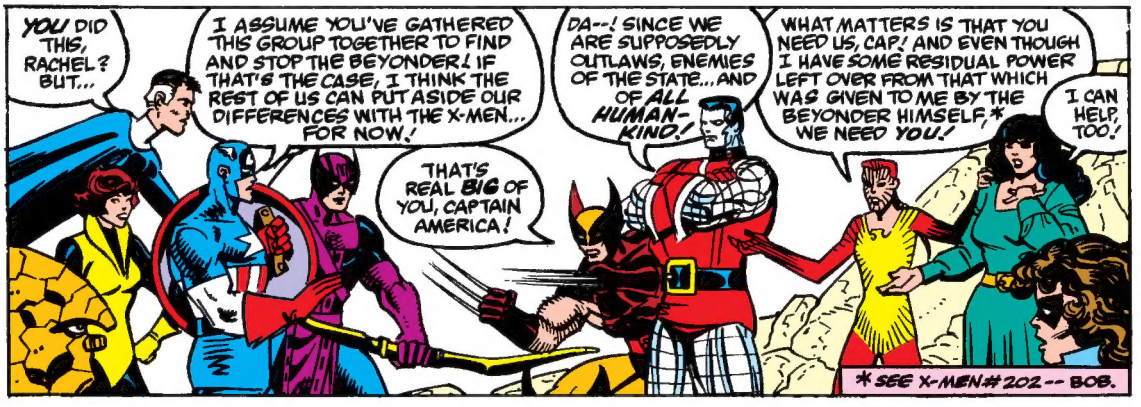

YES, BUT HE'D PRETTY MUCH GIVEN UP USING HIS POWERS, AND WE WERE JUST ANOTHER SUBURBAN COUPLE UNTIL RECENTLY...
YOU SEE, OWIE BEFRIENDED THE BEYONDER WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO OUR UNIVERSE! YESTERDAY, THOUGH, HE WAS ABOUT TO KILL OWIE AND DESTROY ALL EXISTENCE! I SORT OF TRICKED HIM AND STALLED HIM A LITTLE, BUT...
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL THE AVENGERS EVER SINCE, BUT THE LINES ARE ALWAYS BUSY!
JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU ARE, MISS! WE'LL GET THERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

SECONDS LATER, AS MISTER FANTASTIC AND HIS PARTNERS, THE HUMAN TORCH, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN AND THE JADE GIANTESS SHE-HULK SCRAMBLE...
WHAT IS IT, REED?
THE BEYONDER ...AND THE SITUATION IS CRITICAL!
IF ONLY WE STILL HAD OUR POGO PLANE! IT'LL TAKE US HOURS TO GET TO COLORADO BY CONVENTIONAL TRANSPORT!


BUT, SUDDENLY...
HMM...
WHERE ARE WE? WHAT HAPPENED?
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO US MUST HAVE ALSO JUST HAPPENED TO EVERYBODY ELSE HERE, JUDGING FROM THE LOOKS ON THEIR FACES!

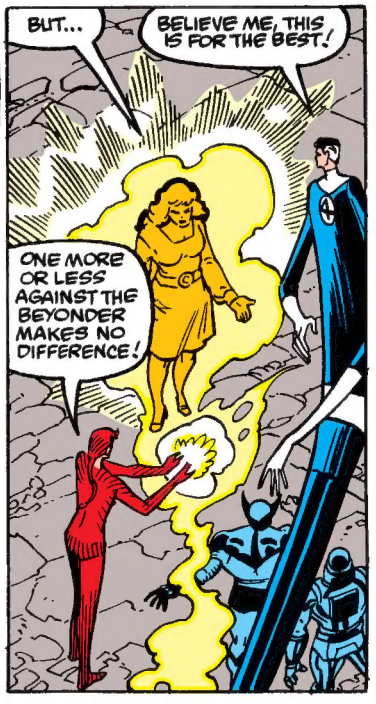
WE SEEM TO BE SOMEWHERE IN THE COLORADO ROCKIES! OBVIOUSLY, WE WERE REDUCED TO COHERENT PARTICLE BEAMS, TRANSMITTED HERE AND REASSEMBLED. BUT-- BY WHOM? THE POWER NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH THAT IS INCREDIBLE!
SO ARE WE! BIG DEAL!
BOY, THE GANG'S ALL HERE--! THE AVENGERS, THE WEST COAST AVENGERS, SPIDER-MAN, ALPHA FLIGHT, THE HULK, THE VISION AND SCARLET WITCH, THE SILVER SURFER, CLOAK AND DAGGER, POWER MAN AND IRON FIST!
IT'S LIKE A CONVENTION OF WHO'S WHO IN SUPER AMERICA!
YEAH? SO NOW WHAT? A MAH JONG TOURNAMENT?

SUDDENLY...
NO WHO'S WHO IS COMPLETE WITHOUT THE X-MEN!
HELLO, EVERYONE! YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY I CALLED YOU HERE!

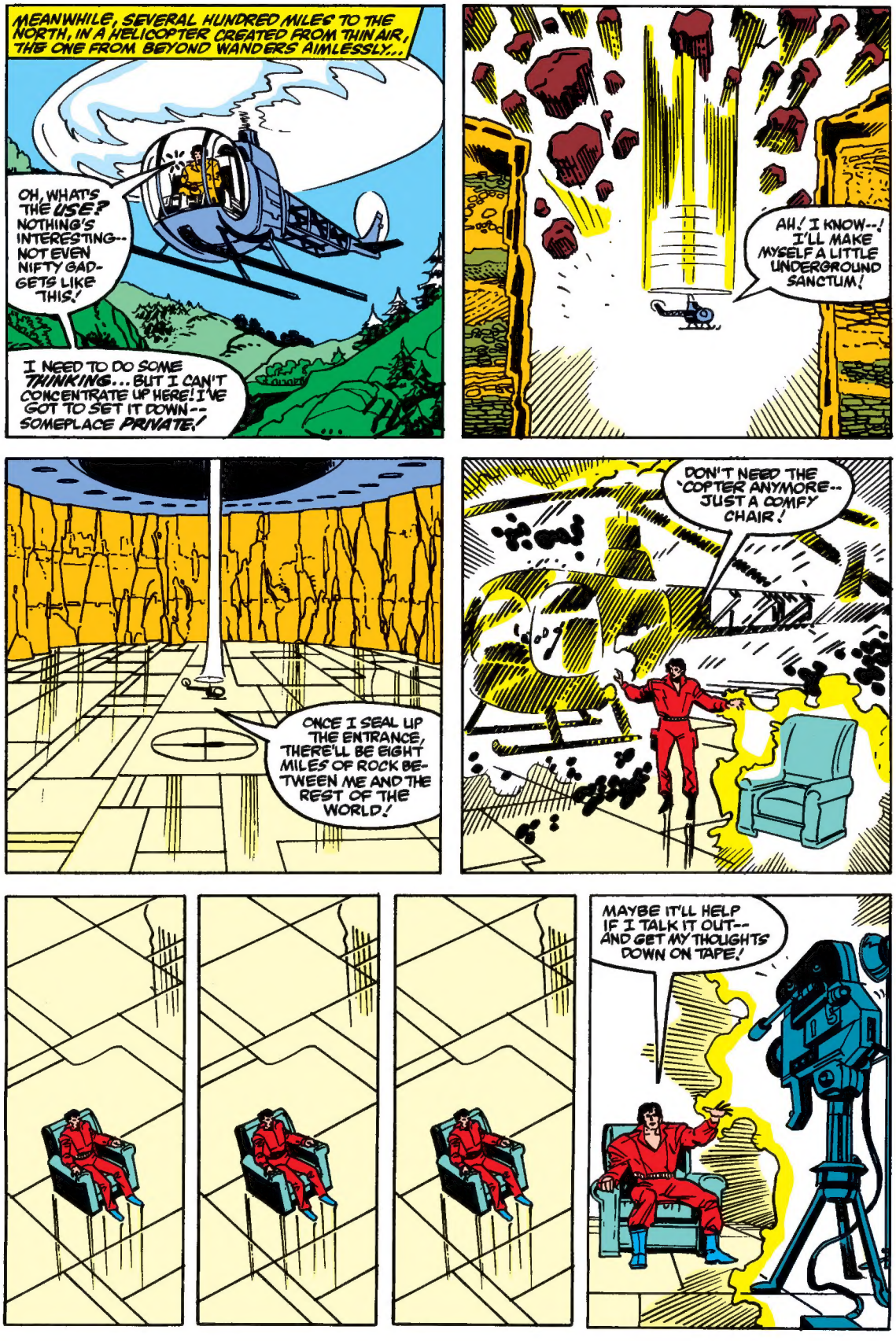

YOU DID THIS, RACHEL? BUT...
I ASSUME YOU'VE GATHERED THIS GROUP TOGETHER TO FIND AND STOP THE BEYONDER! IF THAT'S THE CASE, I THINK THE REST OF US CAN PUT ASIDE OUR DIFFERENCES WITH THE X-MEN... FOR NOW!
THAT'S REAL BIG OF YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA!
DA--! SINCE WE ARE SUPPOSEDLY OUTLAWS, ENEMIES OF THE STATE... AND OF ALL HUMAN-KIND!
WHAT MATTERS IS THAT YOU NEED US, CAP! AND EVEN THOUGH I HAVE SOME RESIDUAL POWER LEFT OVER FROM THAT WHICH WAS GIVEN TO ME BY THE BEYONDER HIMSELF,* WE NEED YOU!
I CAN HELP, TOO!
* SEE X-MEN # 202 -- BOB.

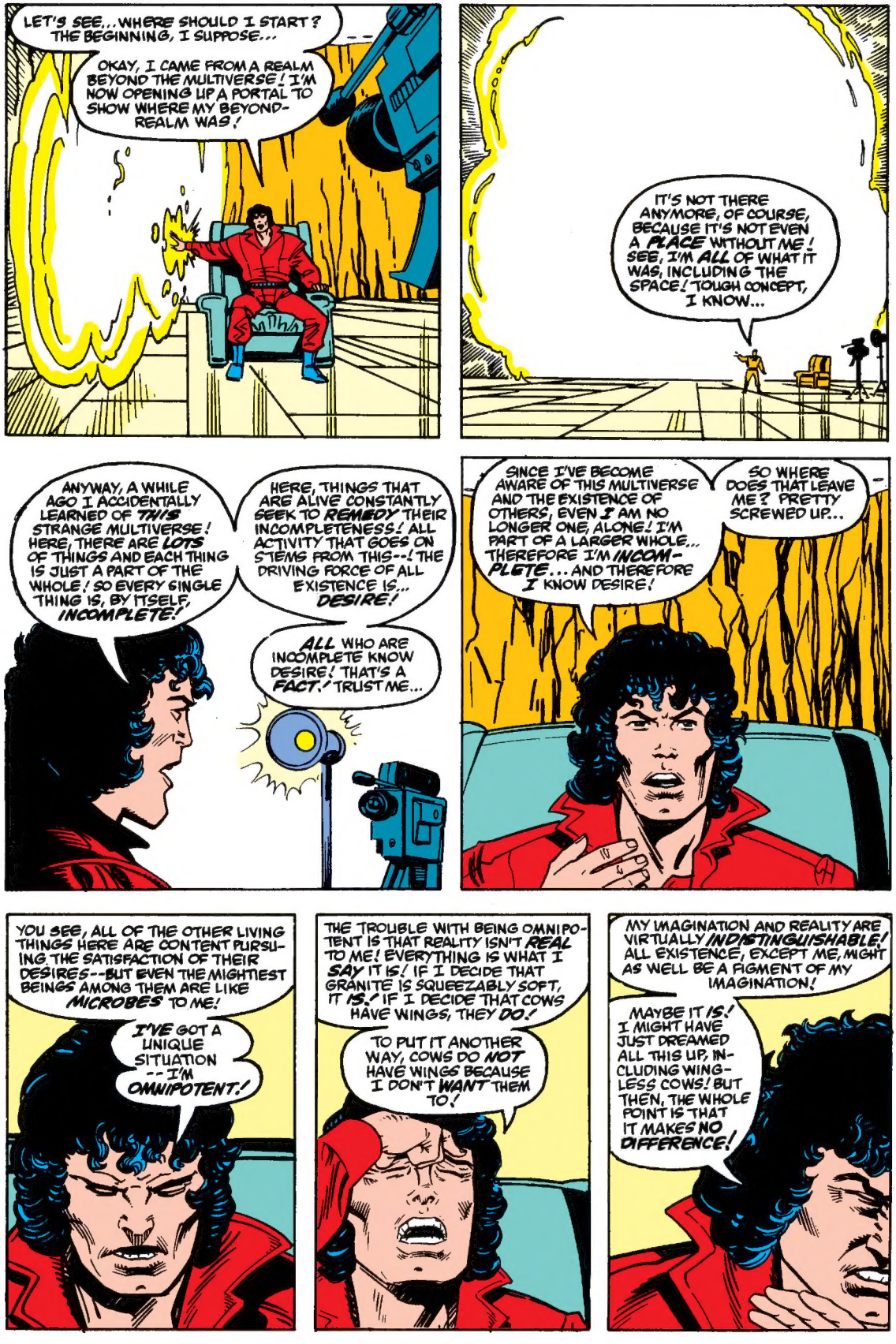
I HAVE POWER! I CAN TURN INTO IONIZED PLASMA--LIKE THE CORE OF A STAR--AND RADIATE PURE THERMAL ENERGY!

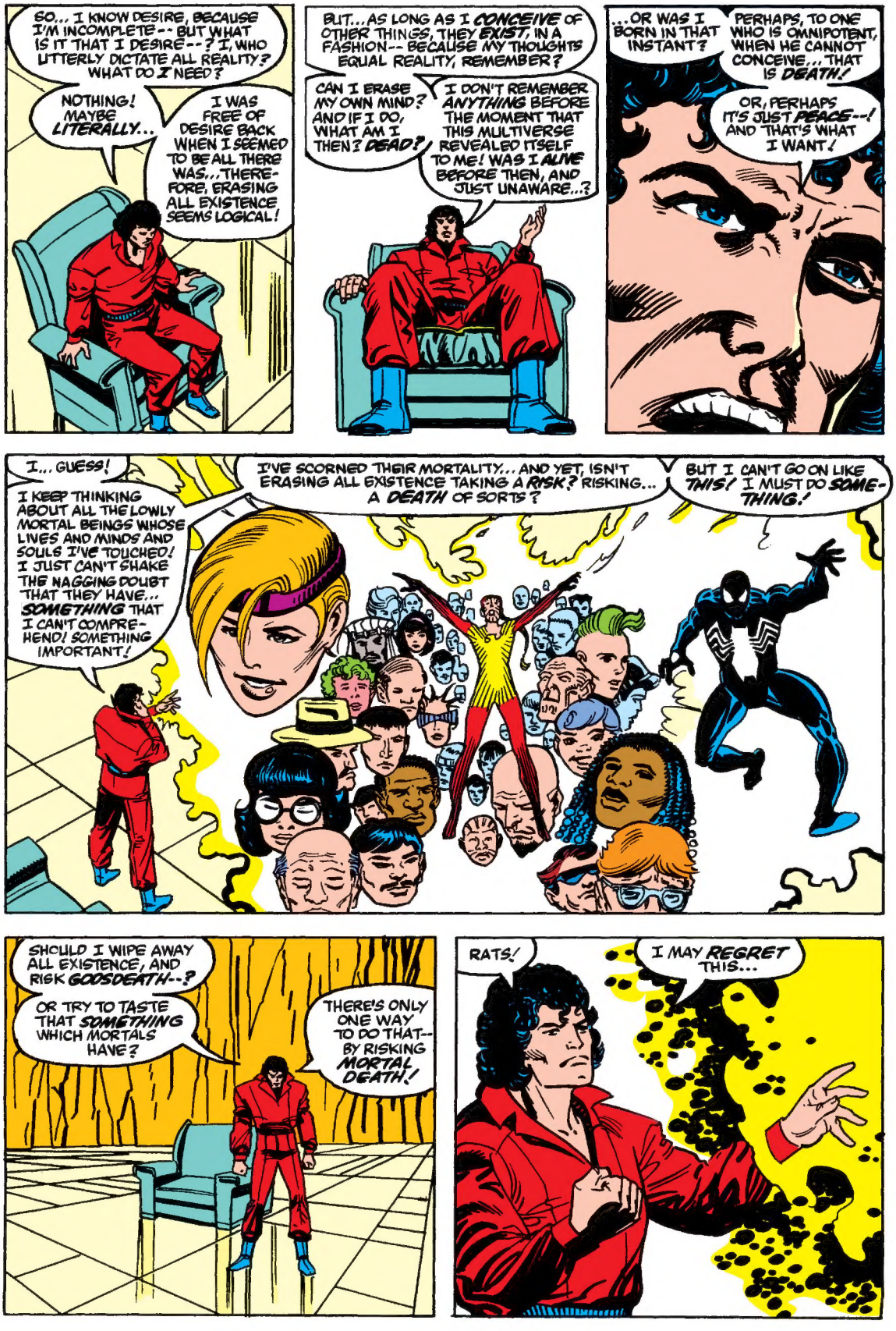
DOCTOR DOOM GAVE ME THAT POWER*! I EVEN HAVE A NAME! I CALL MYSELF VOLCANA!
MISS ROSENBERG, I BROUGHT YOU HERE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE BEYONDER, WHICH I'VE ALREADY GLEANED FROM YOUR MIND! I THINK IT'D BE BEST IF I SIMPLY RE-TURNED YOU TO YOUR HOME!
I CONCUR! THE UPCOMING BATTLE IS NO PLACE FOR SOMEONE WHO'S INEXPERIENCED!
* SEE SECRET WARS # 3 -- BOB.

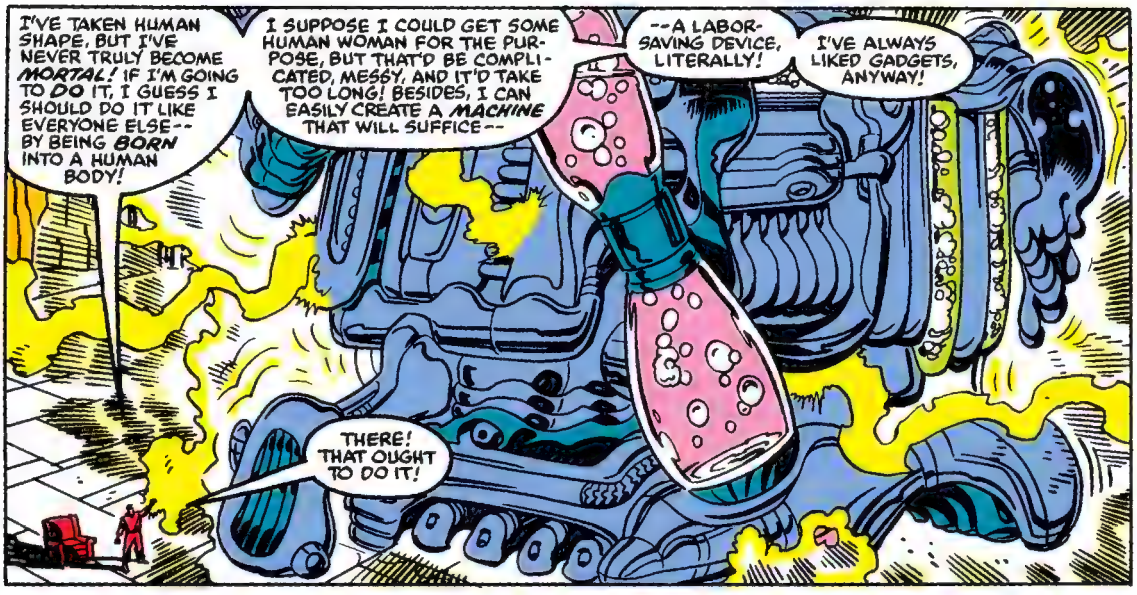

BUT...
BELIEVE ME, THIS IS FOR THE BEST!
ONE MORE OR LESS AGAINST THE BEYONDER MAKES NO DIFFERENCE!

A SPLIT-SECOND LATER, IN A CERTAIN DENVER SUBURB...
SHE TELEPORTED ME BACK TO OWIE'S AND MY APARTMENT.
I--I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T...
...BUT I'VE JUST GOT TO TIPTOE IN AND SNEAK A PEEK TO SEE HOW OWIE IS!
AS MARSHA CAUTIOUSLY ENTERS, SHE RECALLS THE TERRIFYING EVENTS OF TWO DAYS AGO, WHEN THE BEYONDER CAME TO KILL HER BELOVED OWIE--
--AND SHE PRETENDED TO BETRAY HIM...
I NEVER REALLY LOVED HIM! HE'S JUST A WORM! HE'S NOTHING COMPARED TO YOU!
KILL HIM IF YOU WANT, BUT LET ME GO! PLEASE!
MARSHA--! NO-O-O!
THE BEYONDER ALLOWED HER TO FLEE. SEEMINGLY ABANDONED BY HIS LOVER, OWEN REECE, A.K.A. THE MOLECULE MAN, UTTERLY, PITIFULLY COLLAPSED.
IT SAVED HIS LIFE...
NOT MUCH LEFT OF YOU WITHOUT HER, IS THERE? NOT THAT YOU WERE EVER MUCH!
YEP, IT WORKED JUST THE WAY I PRAYED IT WOULD! POOR OWIE WAS SO BROKEN UP, THE BEYONDER DIDN'T BOTHER TO KILL HIM!
I ONLY HOPE THAT SINCE THEN, OWIE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING TO--
--HIMSELF!
THAKK!
OWIE'S TEDDY! OH-H!
HE MUST'VE BEEN TERRIBLY DISTRAUGHT TO DO THIS! OWIE, I'M SO SORRY--!
OH, NO--! OWIE!

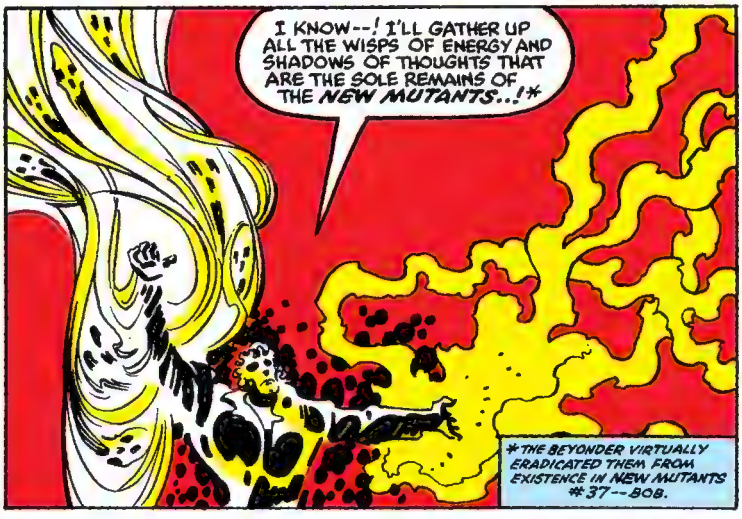

MEANWHILE, SEVERAL HUNDRED MILES TO THE NORTH, IN A HELICOPTER CREATED FROM THIN AIR, THE ONE FROM BEYOND WANDERS AIMLESSLY...
OH, WHAT'S THE USE? NOTHING'S INTERESTING-- NOT EVEN NIFTY GAD-GETS LIKE THIS!
I NEED TO DO SOME THINKING... BUT I CAN'T CONCENTRATE UP HERE! I'VE GOT TO SET IT DOWN-- SOMEPLACE PRIVATE!
AH! I KNOW--! I'LL MAKE MYSELF A LITTLE UNDERGROUND SANCTUM!
ONCE I SEAL UP THE ENTRANCE, THERE'LL BE EIGHT MILES OF ROCK BE-TWEEN ME AND THE REST OF THE WORLD!
DON'T NEED THE 'COPTER ANYMORE-- JUST A COMFY CHAIR!
MAYBE IT'LL HELP IF I TALK IT OUT-- AND GET MY THOUGHTS DOWN ON TAPE!


LET'S SEE...WHERE SHOULD I START? THE BEGINNING, I SUPPOSE...
OKAY, I CAME FROM A REALM BEYOND THE MULTIVERSE! I'M NOW OPENING UP A PORTAL TO SHOW WHERE MY BEYOND-REALM WAS!
IT'S NOT THERE ANYMORE, OF COURSE, BECAUSE IT'S NOT EVEN A PLACE WITHOUT ME! SEE, I'M ALL OF WHAT IT WAS, INCLUDING THE SPACE! TOUGH CONCEPT, I KNOW...
ANYWAY, A WHILE AGO I ACCIDENTALLY LEARNED OF THIS STRANGE MULTIVERSE! HERE, THERE ARE LOTS OF THINGS AND EACH THING IS JUST A PART OF THE WHOLE! SO EVERY SINGLE THING IS, BY ITSELF, INCOMPLETE!
HERE, THINGS THAT ARE ALIVE CONSTANTLY SEEK TO REMEDY THEIR INCOMPLETENESS! ALL ACTIVITY THAT GOES ON STEMS FROM THIS--! THE DRIVING FORCE OF ALL EXISTENCE IS... DESIRE!
ALL WHO ARE INCOMPLETE KNOW DESIRE! THAT'S A FACT,! TRUST ME...
SINCE I'VE BECOME AWARE OF THIS MULTIVERSE AND THE EXISTENCE OF OTHERS, EVEN I AM NO LONGER ONE, ALONE! I'M PART OF A LARGER WHOLE... THEREFORE I'M INCOMPLETE... AND THEREFORE I KNOW DESIRE!
SO WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ME? PRETTY SCREWED UP...
YOU SEE, ALL OF THE OTHER LIVING THINGS HERE ARE CONTENT PURSUING THE SATISFACTION OF THEIR DESIRES--BUT EVEN THE MIGHTIEST BEINGS AMONG THEM ARE LIKE MICROBES TO ME!
I'VE GOT A UNIQUE SITUATION --I'M OMNIPOTENT!
THE TROUBLE WITH BEING OMNIPOTENT IS THAT REALITY ISN'T REAL TO ME! EVERYTHING IS WHAT I SAY IT IS! IF I DECIDE THAT GRANITE IS SQUEEZABLY SOFT, IT IS,! IF I DECIDE THAT COWS HAVE WINGS, THEY DO!
TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, COWS DO NOT HAVE WINGS BECAUSE I DON'T WANT THEM TO!
MY IMAGINATION AND REALITY ARE VIRTUALLY INDISTINGUISHABLE! ALL EXISTENCE, EXCEPT ME, MIGHT AS WELL BE A FIGMENT OF MY IMAGINATION!
MAYBE IT IS! I MIGHT HAVE JUST DREAMED ALL THIS UP, INCLUDING WINGLESS COWS! BUT THEN, THE WHOLE POINT IS THAT IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE!

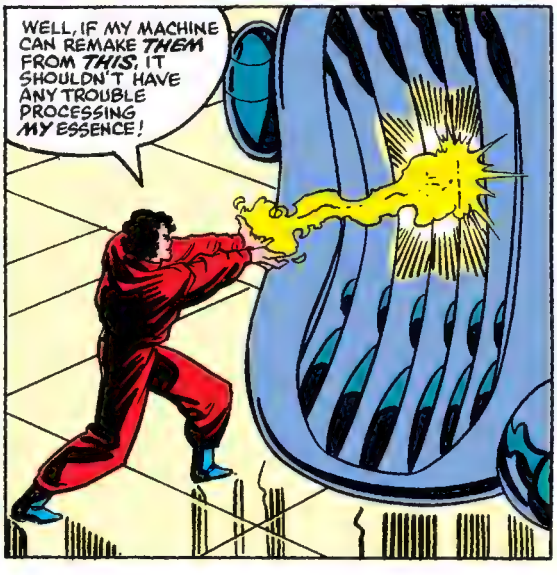

SO... I KNOW DESIRE, BECAUSE I'M INCOMPLETE -- BUT WHAT IS IT THAT I DESIRE--? I, WHO UTTERLY DICTATE ALL REALITY? WHAT DO I NEED?
NOTHING! MAYBE LITERALLY...
I WAS FREE OF DESIRE BACK WHEN I SEEMED TO BE ALL THERE WAS... THEREFORE, ERASING ALL EXISTENCE SEEMS LOGICAL!
BUT... AS LONG AS I CONCEIVE OF OTHER THINGS, THEY EXIST, IN A FASHION-- BECAUSE MY THOUGHTS EQUAL REALITY, REMEMBER?
CAN I ERASE MY OWN MIND? AND IF I DO, WHAT AM I THEN? DEAD?
I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING BEFORE THE MOMENT THAT THIS MULTIVERSE REVEALED ITSELF TO ME! WAS I ALIVE BEFORE THEN, AND JUST UNAWARE...?
...OR WAS I BORN IN THAT INSTANT?
PERHAPS, TO ONE WHO IS OMNIPOTENT, WHEN HE CANNOT CONCEIVE... THAT IS DEATH!
OR, PERHAPS IT'S JUST PEACE--! AND THAT'S WHAT I WANT!
I... GUESS!
I KEEP THINKING ABOUT ALL THE LOWLY MORTAL BEINGS WHOSE LIVES AND MINDS AND SOULS I'VE TOUCHED! I JUST CAN'T SHAKE THE NAGGING DOUBT THAT THEY HAVE... SOMETHING THAT I CAN'T COMPREHEND! SOMETHING IMPORTANT!
I'VE SCORNED THEIR MORTALITY... AND YET, ISN'T ERASING ALL EXISTENCE TAKING A RISK? RISKING... A DEATH OF SORTS?
BUT I CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS! I MUST DO SOMETHING!
SHOULD I WIPE AWAY ALL EXISTENCE, AND RISK GODSDEATH--?
OR TRY TO TASTE THAT SOMETHING WHICH MORTALS HAVE?
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO DO THAT-- BY RISKING MORTAL DEATH!
RATS!
I MAY REGRET THIS...

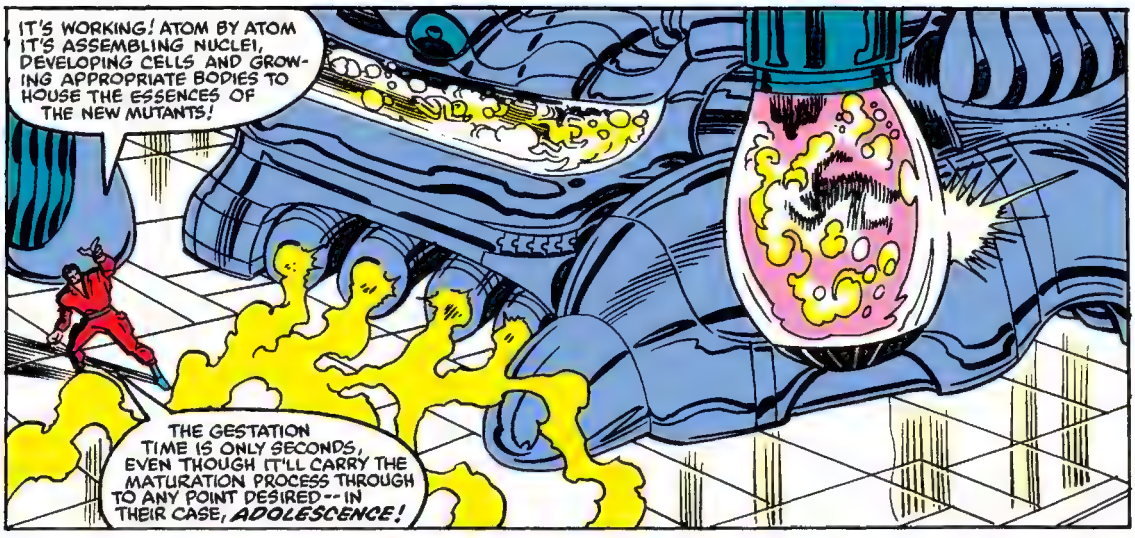

I'VE TAKEN HUMAN SHAPE, BUT I'VE NEVER TRULY BECOME *MORTAL!* IF I'M GOING TO *DO* IT, I GUESS I SHOULD DO IT LIKE EVERYONE ELSE-- BY BEING *BORN* INTO A HUMAN BODY!
I SUPPOSE I COULD GET SOME HUMAN WOMAN FOR THE PURPOSE, BUT THAT'D BE COMPLICATED, MESSY, AND IT'D TAKE TOO LONG! BESIDES, I CAN EASILY CREATE A *MACHINE* THAT WILL SUFFICE--
--A LABOR-SAVING DEVICE, LITERALLY!
I'VE ALWAYS LIKED GADGETS, ANYWAY!
THERE! THAT OUGHT TO DO IT!

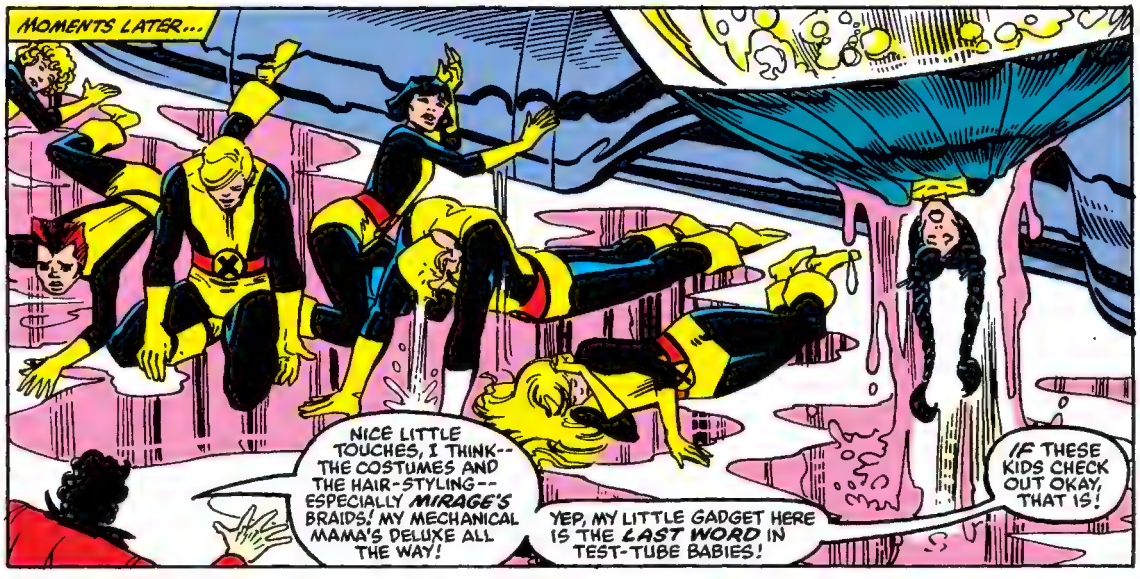
MAYBE I SHOULD *TEST* IT FIRST!
HMM...

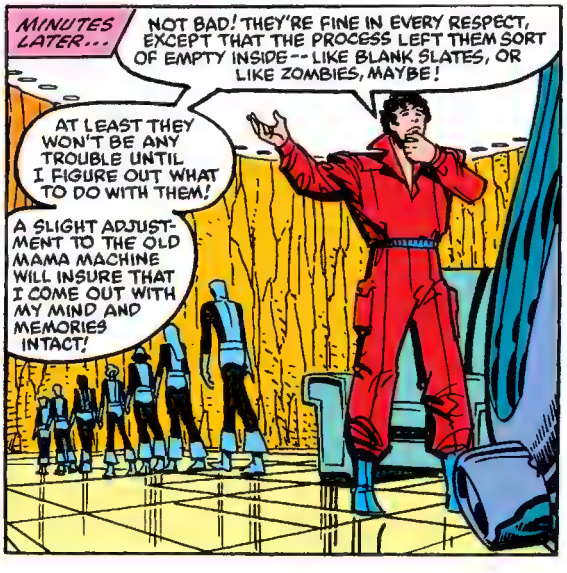

I KNOW--! I'LL GATHER UP ALL THE WISPS OF ENERGY AND SHADOWS OF THOUGHTS THAT ARE THE SOLE REMAINS OF THE *NEW MUTANTS*..!*
*THE BEYONDER VIRTUALLY ERADICATED THEM FROM EXISTENCE IN NEW MUTANTS #37--BOB.

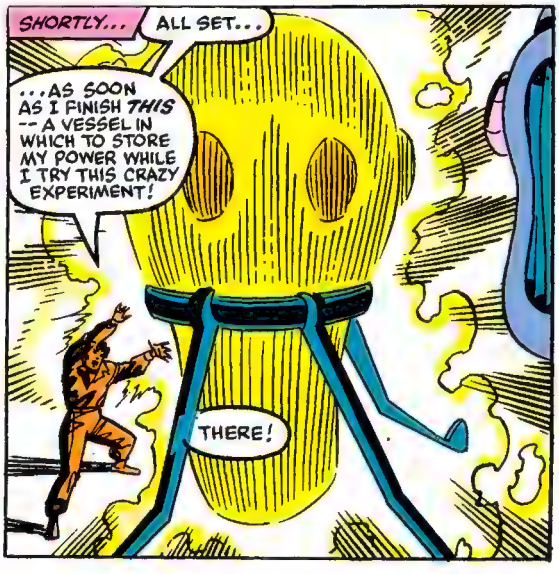
BOY, THERE'S NOT MUCH HERE! I WAS PRETTY DARN THOROUGH!

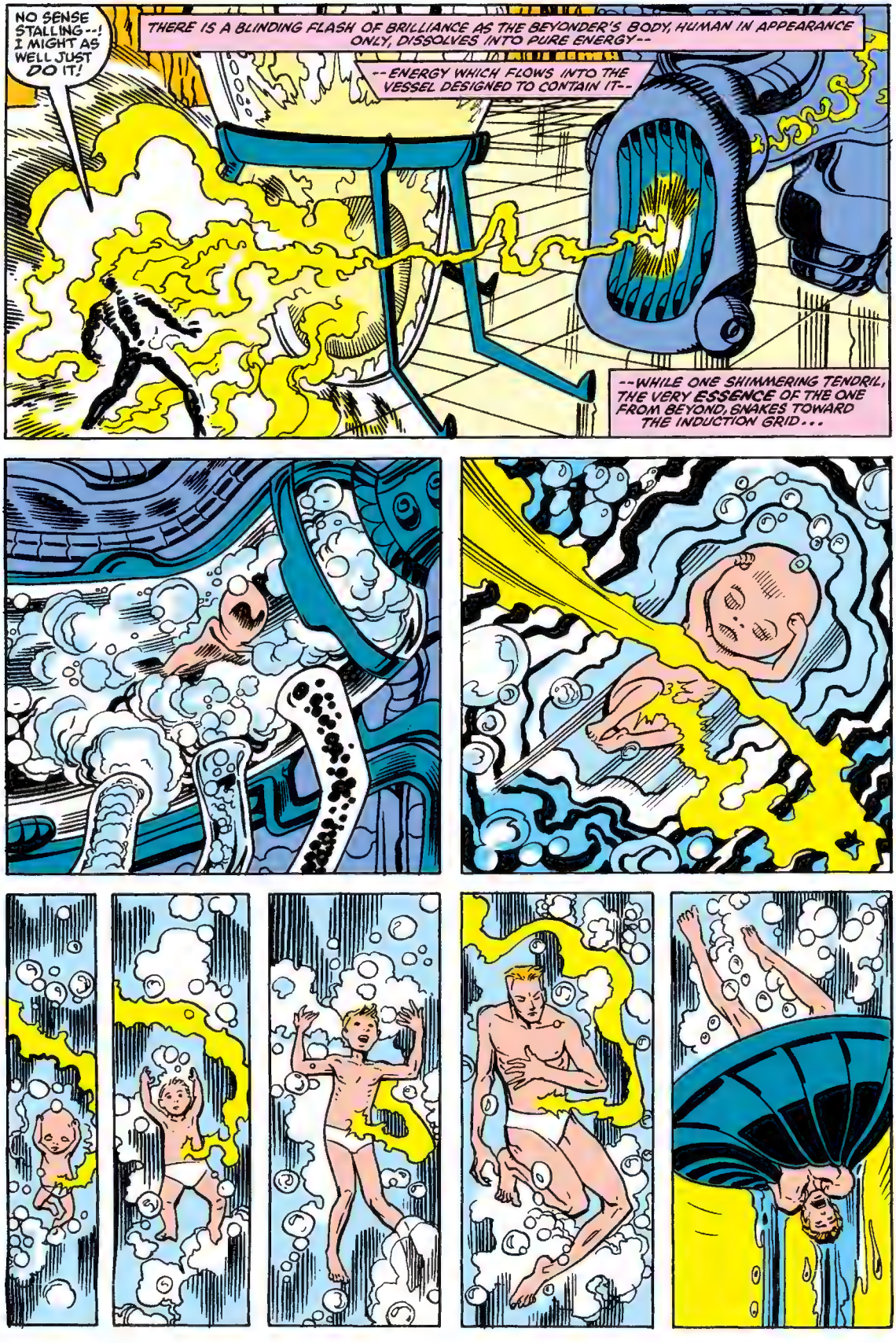

WELL, IF MY MACHINE CAN REMAKE *THEM* FROM *THIS*, IT SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE PROCESSING *MY* ESSENCE!

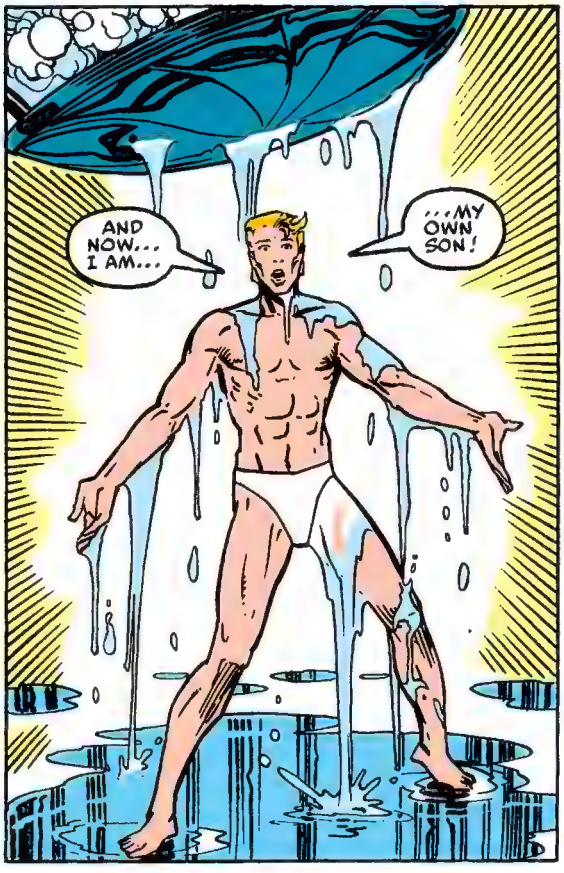

IT'S WORKING! ATOM BY ATOM IT'S ASSEMBLING NUCLEI, DEVELOPING CELLS AND GROWING APPROPRIATE BODIES TO HOUSE THE ESSENCES OF THE NEW MUTANTS!
THE GESTATION TIME IS ONLY SECONDS, EVEN THOUGH IT'LL CARRY THE MATURATION PROCESS THROUGH TO ANY POINT DESIRED -- IN THEIR CASE, ADOLESCENCE!

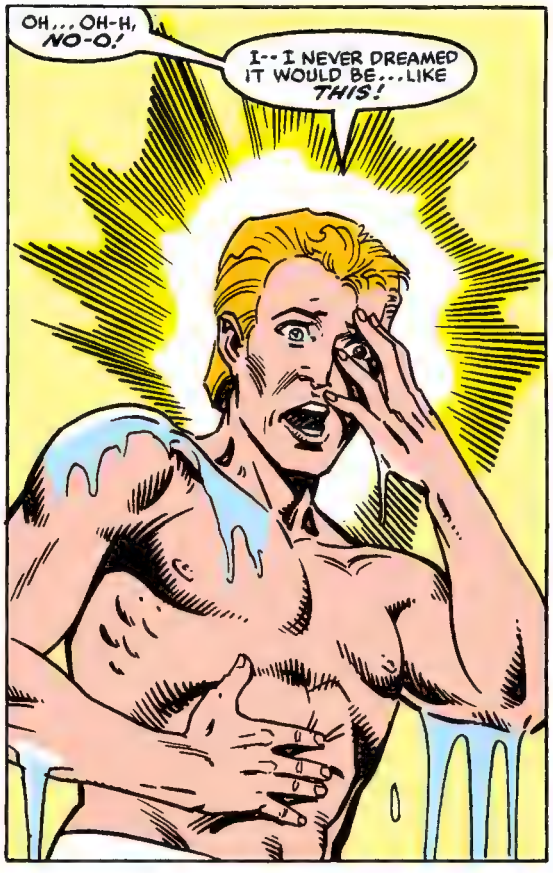

MOMENTS LATER...
NICE LITTLE TOUCHES, I THINK -- THE COSTUMES AND THE HAIR-STYLING -- ESPECIALLY MIRAGE'S BRAIDS! MY MECHANICAL MAMA'S DELUXE ALL THE WAY!
YEP, MY LITTLE GADGET HERE IS THE LAST WORD IN TEST-TUBE BABIES!
IF THESE KIDS CHECK OUT OKAY, THAT IS!

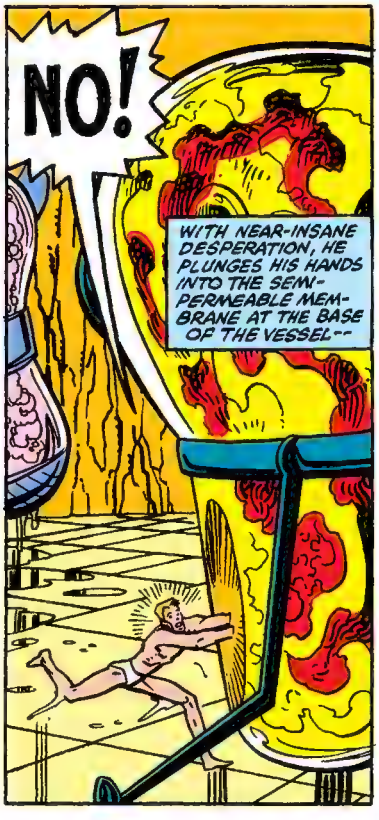

MINUTES LATER...
NOT BAD! THEY'RE FINE IN EVERY RESPECT, EXCEPT THAT THE PROCESS LEFT THEM SORT OF EMPTY INSIDE -- LIKE BLANK SLATES, OR LIKE ZOMBIES, MAYBE!
AT LEAST THEY WON'T BE ANY TROUBLE UNTIL I FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH THEM!
A SLIGHT ADJUSTMENT TO THE OLD MAMA MACHINE WILL INSURE THAT I COME OUT WITH MY MIND AND MEMORIES INTACT!

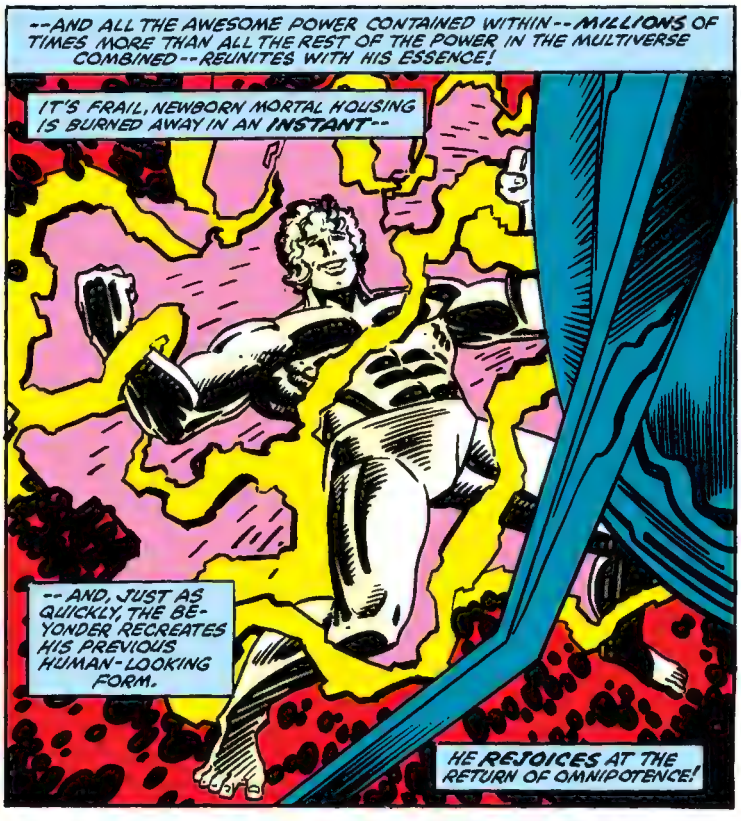

SHORTLY...
ALL SET...
...AS SOON AS I FINISH THIS -- A VESSEL IN WHICH TO STORE MY POWER WHILE I TRY THIS CRAZY EXPERIMENT!
THERE!

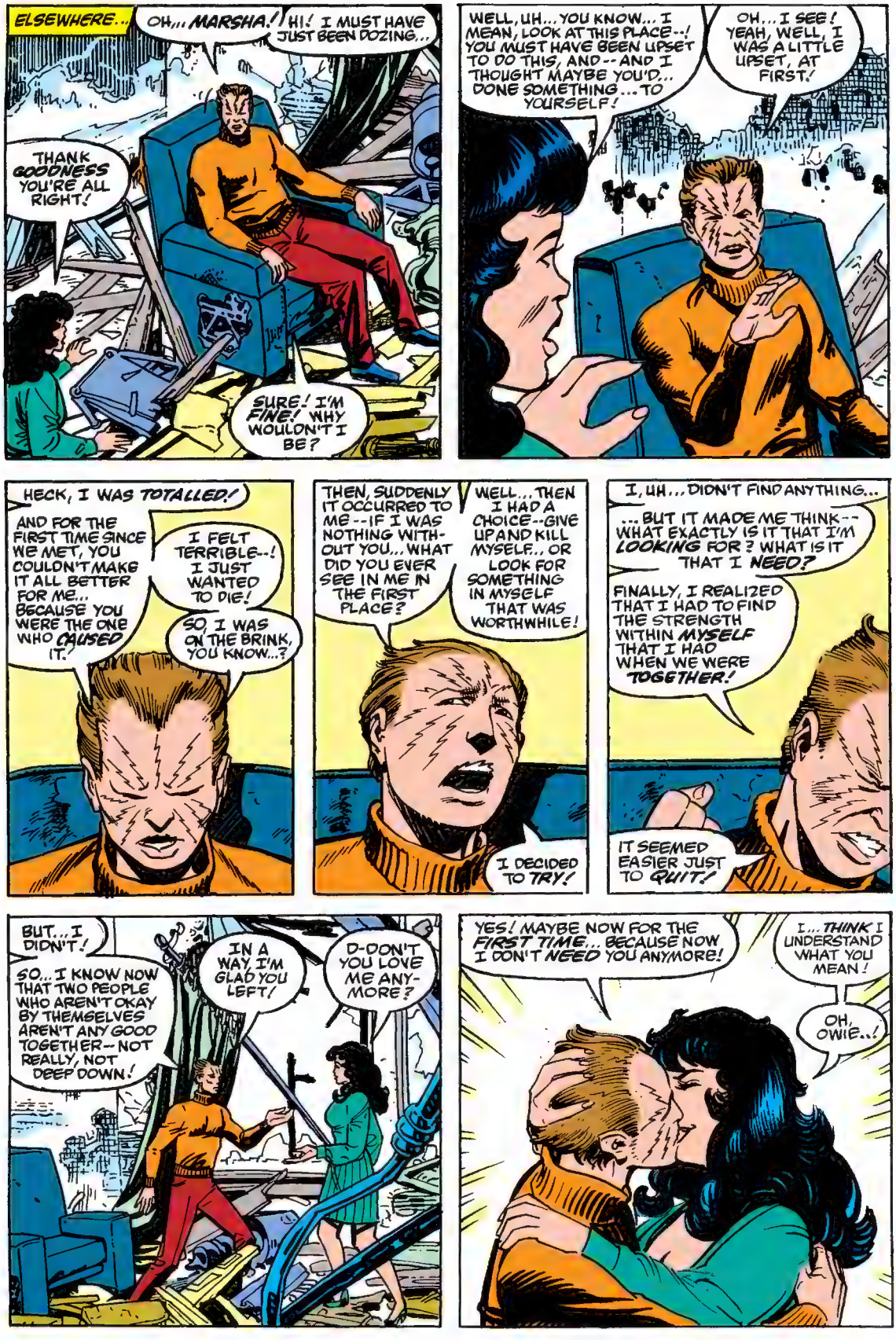

NO SENSE STALLING--! I MIGHT AS WELL JUST DO IT!
THERE IS A BLINDING FLASH OF BRILLIANCE AS THE BEYONDER'S BODY, HUMAN IN APPEARANCE ONLY, DISSOLVES INTO PURE ENERGY--
--ENERGY WHICH FLOWS INTO THE VESSEL DESIGNED TO CONTAIN IT--
--WHILE ONE SHIMMERING TENDRIL, THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE ONE FROM BEYOND, SNAKES TOWARD THE INDUCTION GRID...


AND NOW... I AM...
...MY OWN SON!

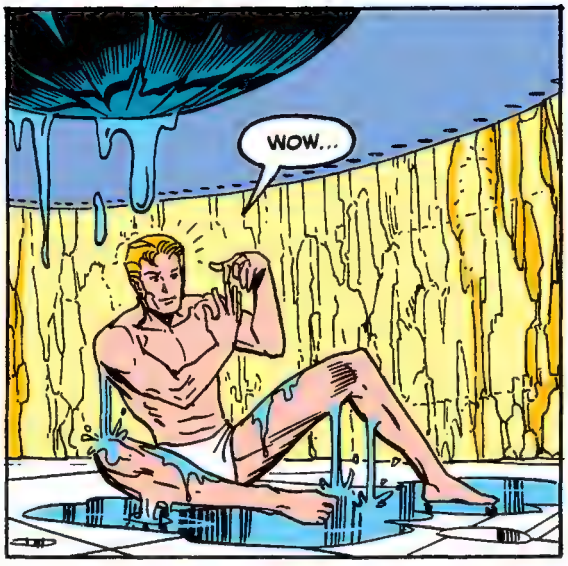

OH... OH-H, NO-O!
I-- I NEVER DREAMED IT WOULD BE... LIKE THIS!

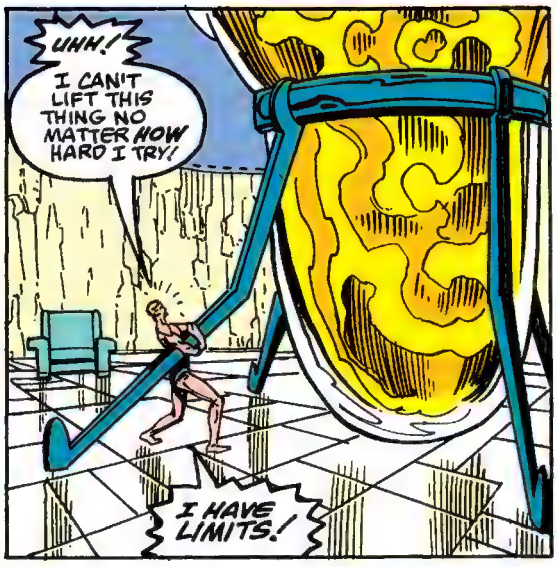

NO!
WITH NEAR-INSANE DESPERATION, HE PLUNGES HIS HANDS INTO THE SEMI-PERMEABLE MEMBRANE AT THE BASE OF THE VESSEL--

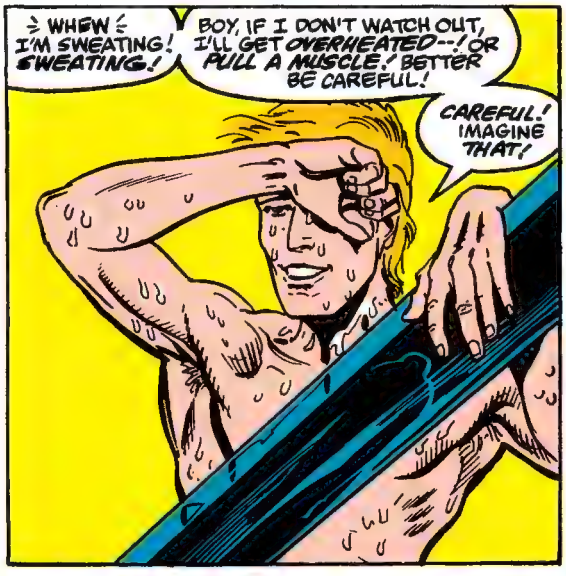

--AND ALL THE AWESOME POWER CONTAINED WITHIN--MILLIONS OF TIMES MORE THAN ALL THE REST OF THE POWER IN THE MULTIVERSE COMBINED--REUNITES WITH HIS ESSENCE!
IT'S FRAIL, NEWBORN MORTAL HOUSING IS BURNED AWAY IN AN INSTANT--
--AND, JUST AS QUICKLY, THE BEYONDER RECREATES HIS PREVIOUS HUMAN-LOOKING FORM.
HE REJOICES AT THE RETURN OF OMNIPOTENCE!


ELSEWHERE...
OH,,, MARSHA!
HI! I MUST HAVE JUST BEEN DOZING...
THANK GOODNESS YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
SURE! I'M FINE! WHY WOULDN'T I BE?
WELL, UH... YOU KNOW... I MEAN, LOOK AT THIS PLACE--! YOU MUST HAVE BEEN UPSET TO DO THIS, AND-- AND I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D... DONE SOMETHING... TO YOURSELF!
OH... I SEE! YEAH, WELL, I WAS A LITTLE UPSET, AT FIRST.
HECK, I WAS TOTALLED!
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE WE MET, YOU COULDN'T MAKE IT ALL BETTER FOR ME... BECAUSE YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CAUSED IT.
I FELT TERRIBLE--! I JUST WANTED TO DIE!
SO, I WAS ON THE BRINK, YOU KNOW...?
THEN, SUDDENLY IT OCCURRED TO ME--IF I WAS NOTHING WITHOUT YOU... WHAT DID YOU EVER SEE IN ME IN THE FIRST PLACE?
WELL... THEN I HAD A CHOICE--GIVE UP AND KILL MYSELF... OR LOOK FOR SOMETHING IN MYSELF THAT WAS WORTHWHILE!
I DECIDED TO TRY!
I, UH... DIDN'T FIND ANYTHING...
... BUT IT MADE ME THINK-- WHAT EXACTLY IS IT THAT I'M LOOKING FOR? WHAT IS IT THAT I NEED?
FINALLY, I REALIZED THAT I HAD TO FIND THE STRENGTH WITHIN MYSELF THAT I HAD WHEN WE WERE TOGETHER!
IT SEEMED EASIER JUST TO QUIT!
BUT... I DIDN'T!
SO... I KNOW NOW THAT TWO PEOPLE WHO AREN'T OKAY BY THEMSELVES AREN'T ANY GOOD TOGETHER-- NOT REALLY, NOT DEEP DOWN!
IN A WAY, I'M GLAD YOU LEFT/
D-DON'T YOU LOVE ME ANYMORE?
YES! MAYBE NOW FOR THE FIRST TIME... BECAUSE NOW I DON'T NEED YOU ANYMORE!
I... THINK I UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU MEAN!
OH, OWIE..!

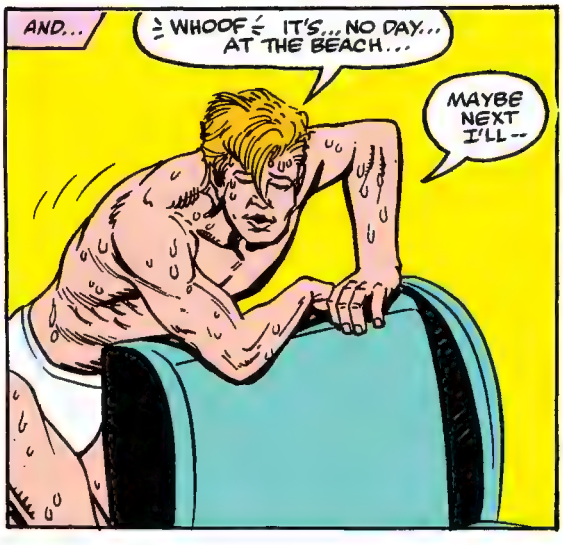
COME ON, MARSHA--!
WHERE?
TO SAVE THE WORLD--! OUR WORLD!
B-BUT--WHY US, OWIE? WHY CAN'T SOME OF THOSE "GREAT POWERS OF THE MULTIVERSE" YOU TOLD ME ABOUT--ETERNITY, EON, THE LIVING TRIBUNAL, THOSE GUYS--WHY CAN'T THEY DO IT?
THEY'RE AFRAID NOW! NONE OF THEM WOULD DARE GET INVOLVED--EXCEPT MEPHISTO, MAYBE--BUT HE'S NOT A VERY RELIABLE GUY!
NO, I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO IT!
ALONE...IF NECESSARY!
MEANWHILE...
WHAT A RUSH!
IT WAS AWESOME...TERRIFYING...EXHILARATING!
I--I WAS AGING! EACH BREATH SEEMED LIKE... AN EVENT! EACH SECOND WAS UNIQUE! IT WAS UNBEARABLE--!
--AND YET, NOW THE OPPRESSIVE SAMENESS OF EVERY MOMENT IN THIS FORM IS UNBEARABLE!
I'VE GOT TO TRY IT AGAIN!


WOW...

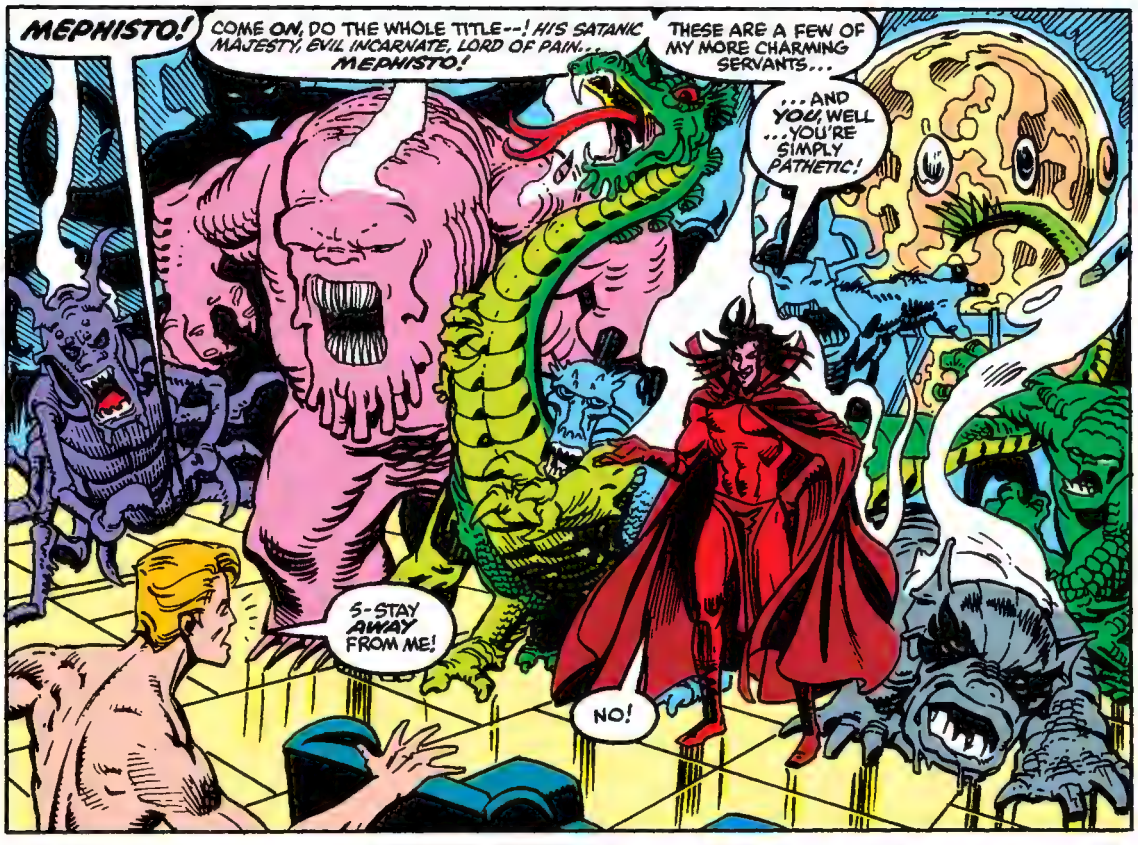

UHH!
I CAN'T LIFT THIS THING NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY!
I HAVE LIMITS!

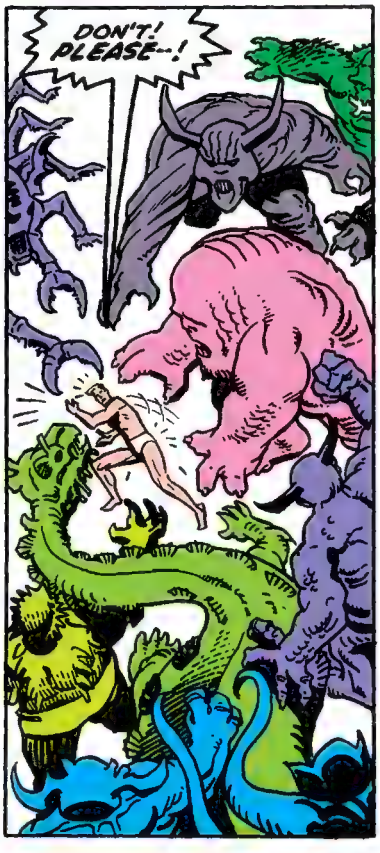

≥ WHEW ≤ I'M SWEATING! SWEATING!
BOY, IF I DON'T WATCH OUT, I'LL GET OVERHEATED--! OR PULL A MUSCLE! BETTER BE CAREFUL!
CAREFUL! IMAGINE THAT!

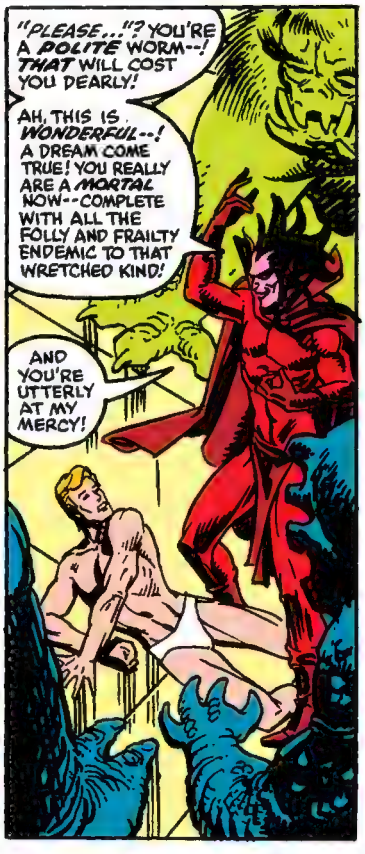
GEE, I WONDER WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE OUT OF BREATH!?
LET'S SEE--!


AND...
≥ WHOOF ≤ IT'S... NO DAY... AT THE BEACH...
MAYBE NEXT I'LL --

HUH?!
UH-OH...
FWOOSH!

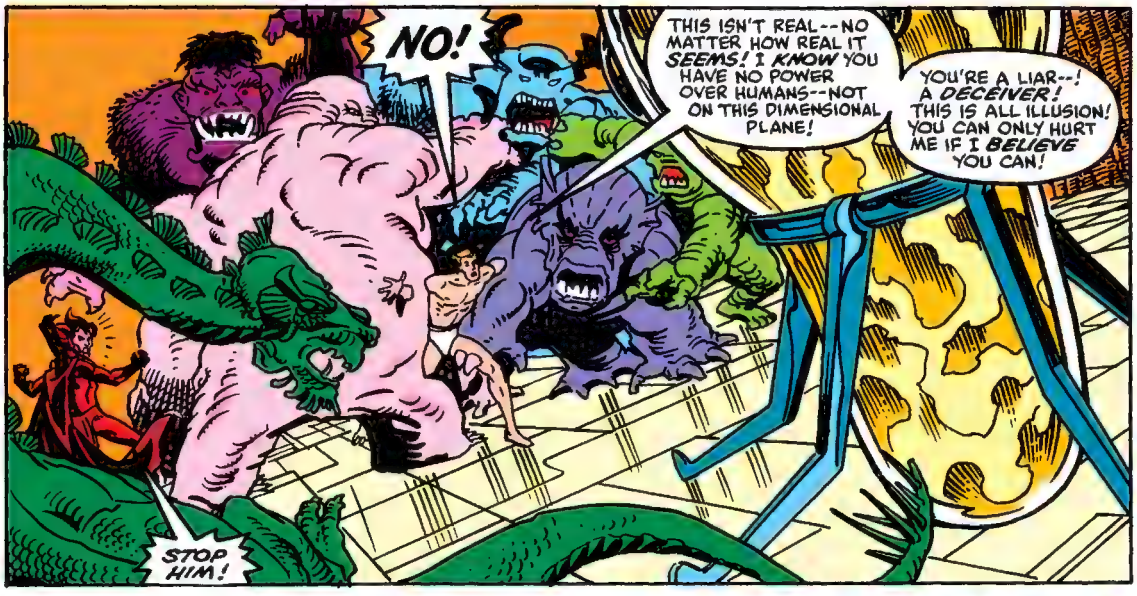

MEPHISTO!
COME ON, DO THE WHOLE TITLE--! HIS SATANIC MAJESTY, EVIL INCARNATE, LORD OF PAIN... MEPHISTO!
THESE ARE A FEW OF MY MORE CHARMING SERVANTS...
...AND YOU, WELL ...YOU'RE SIMPLY PATHETIC!
S-STAY AWAY FROM ME!
NO!

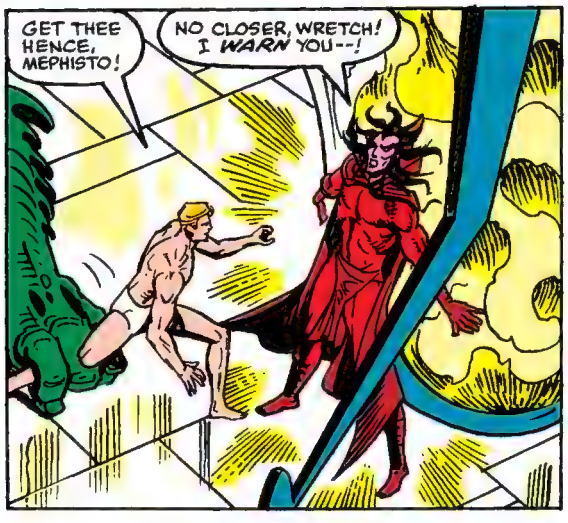

DON'T! PLEASE--!

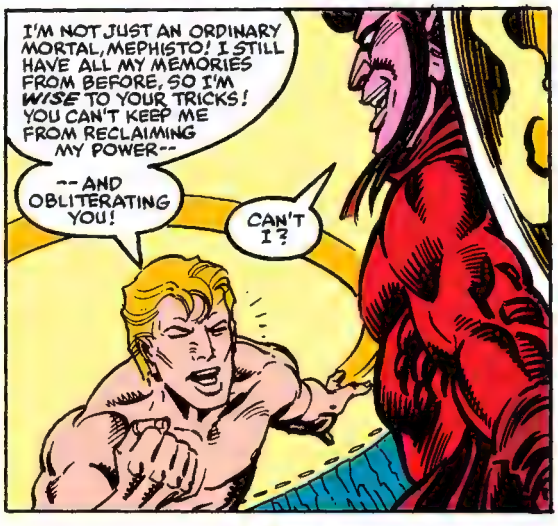

"PLEASE..."? YOU'RE A POLITE WORM--! THAT WILL COST YOU DEARLY!
AH, THIS IS WONDERFUL--! A DREAM COME TRUE! YOU REALLY ARE A MORTAL NOW--COMPLETE WITH ALL THE FOLLY AND FRAILTY ENDEMIC TO THAT WRETCHED KIND!
AND YOU'RE UTTERLY AT MY MERCY!

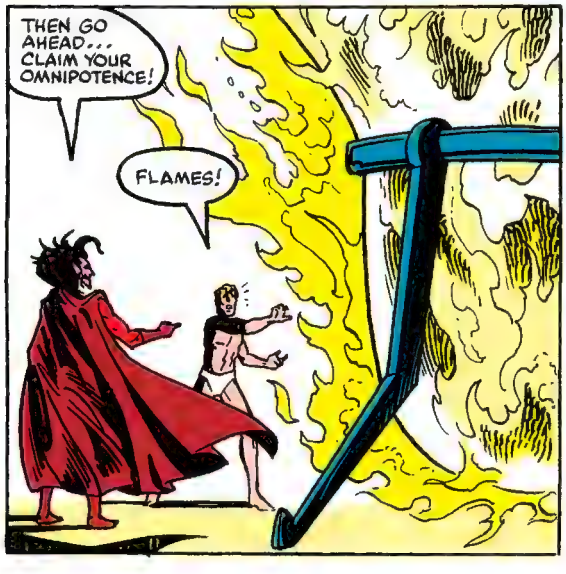
OF COURSE... I HAVE NO MERCY!
NOW WHAT SHALL I DO TO YOU?
FOR THE ONE WHO THREATENED TO DESTROY ALL EXISTENCE, INCLUDING MY OWN DARK INFERNAL REALM, A SPECIAL FATE IS IN ORDER--SOMETHING TRULY VILE!

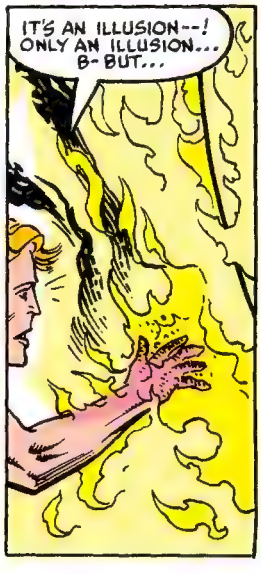
"WE COULD, PERHAPS, BOIL YOU IN BILE...
"NO! BETTER TO LET MY RAZORVINES GROW THROUGH YOUR FLESH... SLOWLY!
"AH! I'VE GOT IT! MAGGOTS!
MIND IF I JUST VOMIT SOME ONTO YOUR FACE, HMM? YOU DO? GOOD!
EEYAGHH!
HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT THEY BITE?
THIS... CAN'T... BE... REAL...
OH, YES, IT CAN!

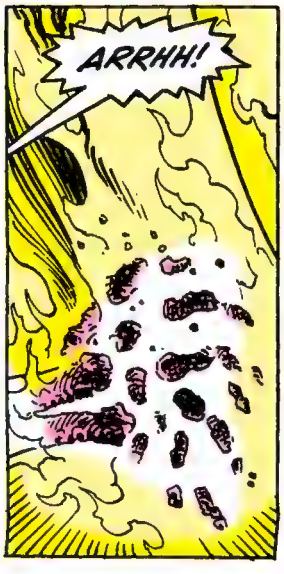

NO!
THIS ISN'T REAL--NO MATTER HOW REAL IT SEEMS! I KNOW YOU HAVE NO POWER OVER HUMANS--NOT ON THIS DIMENSIONAL PLANE!
YOU'RE A LIAR--! A DECEIVER! THIS IS ALL ILLUSION! YOU CAN ONLY HURT ME IF I BELIEVE YOU CAN!
STOP HIM!


GET THEE HENCE, MEPHISTO!
NO CLOSER, WRETCH! I WARN YOU--!

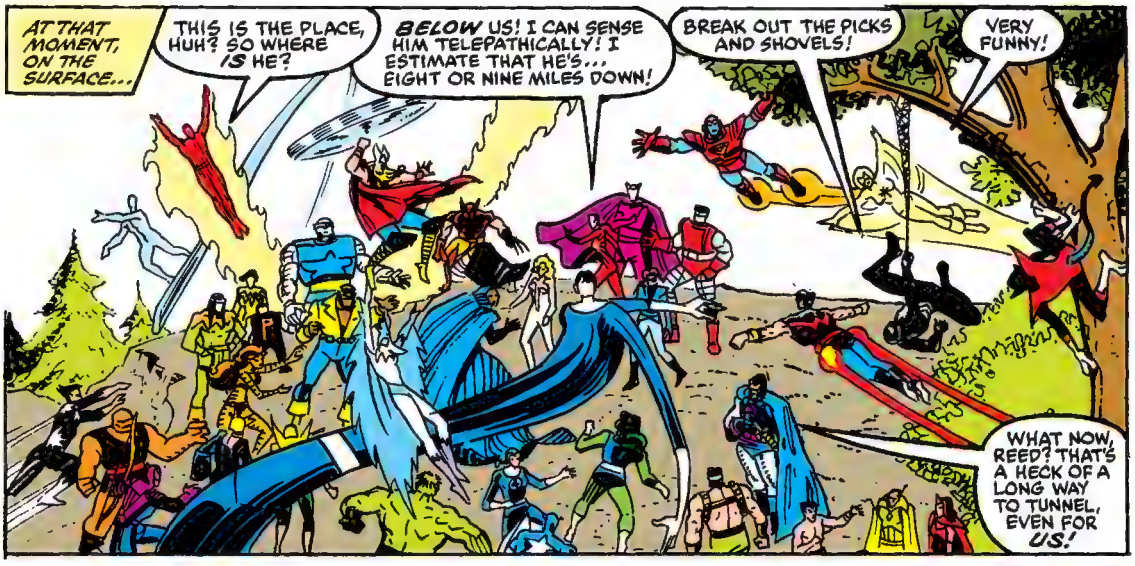

I'M NOT JUST AN ORDINARY MORTAL, MEPHISTO! I STILL HAVE ALL MY MEMORIES FROM BEFORE, SO I'M WISE TO YOUR TRICKS! YOU CAN'T KEEP ME FROM RECLAIMING MY POWER--
--AND OBLITERATING YOU!
CAN'T I?


THEN GO AHEAD... CLAIM YOUR OMNIPOTENCE!
FLAMES!


IT'S AN ILLUSION--! ONLY AN ILLUSION... B-BUT...

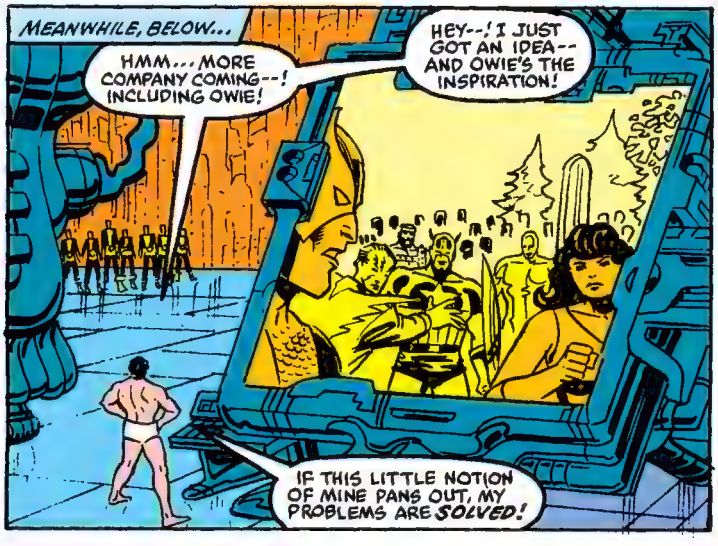

ARRHH!

MMM! SMELL--! SOMETHING'S COOKING!
N-NO! IT'S A LIE! ILLUSION...
YOUR SENSES SPEAK TRUTH TO YOU, FOOL! THE AGONY IS REAL! PULL YOUR ARM BACK AND LOOK AT THE CHARRED STUMP! FEEL IT-- WHEN IT COOLS -- WITH YOUR REMAINING HAND...
... AND IF YOU HAVEN'T PASSED OUT BY THEN, PERHAPS WE'LL PLAY "LET'S MAKE A DEAL"! HMM?
LIAR!
AHH-H!
HE'S GONE!
SO WHAT? THERE'S NOWHERE HE CAN HIDE FROM ME!
BUT... I HAVE MANY ENEMIES! ALL THE MIGHTY OF THIS MULTIVERSE FEAR ME! IF I BECOME MORTAL AGAIN, WHERE CAN I HIDE FROM THEM?
IS THERE NO PEACE FOR ME? MUST I ANNIHILATE ALL ELSE--?!


AT THAT MOMENT, ON THE SURFACE...
THIS IS THE PLACE, HUH? SO WHERE IS HE?
BELOW US! I CAN SENSE HIM TELEPATHICALLY! I ESTIMATE THAT HE'S... EIGHT OR NINE MILES DOWN!
BREAK OUT THE PICKS AND SHOVELS!
VERY FUNNY!
WHAT NOW, REED? THAT'S A HECK OF A LONG WAY TO TUNNEL, EVEN FOR US!

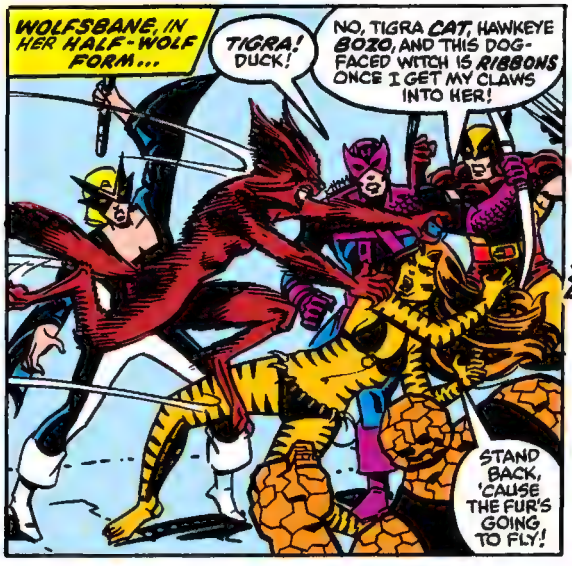
SUDDENLY...
I CAN GET US THERE!
THE MOLECULE MAN--!
ANOTHER NOGOODNIK! JUST WHAT WE NEED! GRAB HIM! QUICK!
OH, PLEASE--! THIS IS NO TIME TO HASSLE ME OVER MY SORDID PAST! YOU NEED ME!

SURE, AND NEWCASTLE NEEDS COAL!
QUIET, PLEASE, HAWKEYE! HE'S RIGHT! IF HE'LL HELP US, WE ACTUALLY HAVE A CHANCE--! A SMALL ONE, ADMITTEDLY...
MY PAST AIN'T PRETTY EITHER! AN' I LIKE LONG ODDS BETTER'N NO ODDS!
THANKS... WOLVERINE ISN'T IT?

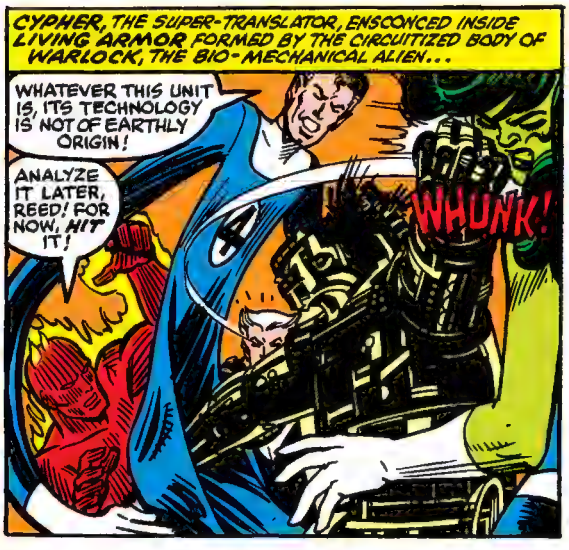

MEANWHILE, BELOW...
HMM... MORE COMPANY COMING--! INCLUDING OWIE!
HEY--! I JUST GOT AN IDEA-- AND OWIE'S THE INSPIRATION!
IF THIS LITTLE NOTION OF MINE PANS OUT, MY PROBLEMS ARE SOLVED!

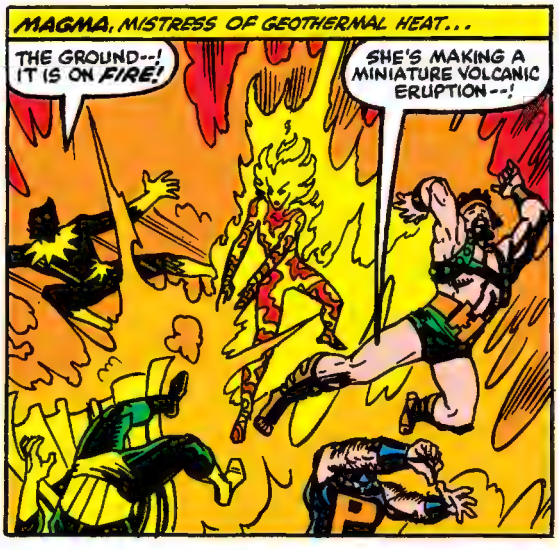
I'LL HAVE TO TINKER WITH THE MAMA MACHINE FOR A WHILE... SEE IF I CAN MAKE IT DO WHAT I NEED...
... BUT OWIE AND COMPANY WILL BE HERE IN SECONDS TO BOTHER ME!
HMM...

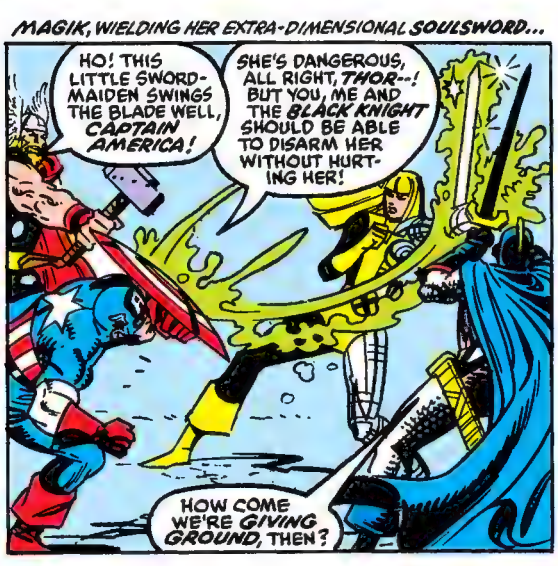
I SUSPECTED THAT I'D FIND A USE FOR THE NEW MUTANTS!
I'LL JUST RECREATE WARLOCK, THEIR BIO-MECHANICAL ALIEN PARTNER, SO THEY'LL BE AT FULL STRENGTH--
--THEN "PROGRAM" INSTRUCTIONS TO DEFEND ME INTO THEIR VEGGED-OUT HEADS--
"--AND SHIP 'EM UP TO THE SURFACE!"
HEY--! WHERE'D THEY POP IN FROM?
THREE GUESSES WHO SENT 'EM! BE READY FOR ANYTHING!
BUT THEY'RE JUST KIDS! EXCEPT THAT WEIRD ONE--! WHO KNOWS WHAT HE IS!
STRANGE--! THEY'RE WEARING COSTUMES LIKE THE X-MEN WORE LONG AGO! WHY? WHO ARE THEY?
RECENTLY, THE BEYONDER UTTERLY ERASED THESE NEW MUTANTS, AND ALL MEMORY OF THEM, AND ALL TRACES OF THEIR EXISTENCE--
--THUS NO ONE PRESENT IS TRULY PREPARED FOR THEIR ATTACK!


WOLFSBANE, IN HER HALF-WOLF FORM...
TIGRA! DUCK!
NO, TIGRA CAT, HAWKEYE BOZO, AND THIS DOG-FACED WITCH IS RIBBONS ONCE I GET MY CLAWS INTO HER!
STAND BACK, 'CAUSE THE FUR'S GOING TO FLY!

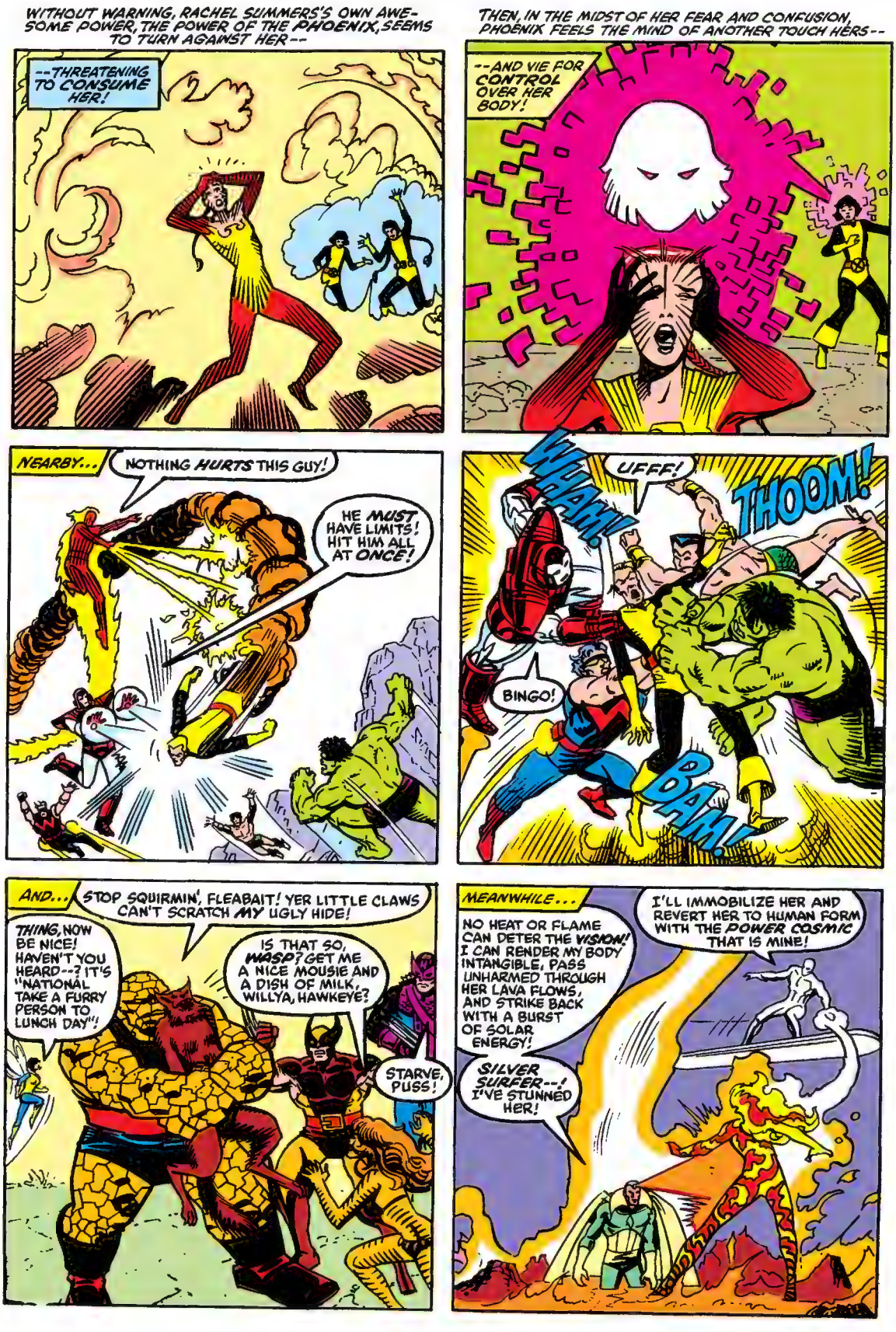
CANNONBALL, THE NEAR-INVULNERABLE HUMAN ROCKET...
THWAM!
GRRRAHH!


CYPHER, THE SUPER-TRANSLATOR, ENSCONCED INSIDE LIVING ARMOR FORMED BY THE CIRCUITIZED BODY OF WARLOCK, THE BIO-MECHANICAL ALIEN...
WHATEVER THIS UNIT IS, ITS TECHNOLOGY IS NOT OF EARTHLY ORIGIN!
ANALYZE IT LATER, REED! FOR NOW, HIT IT!
WHUNK!

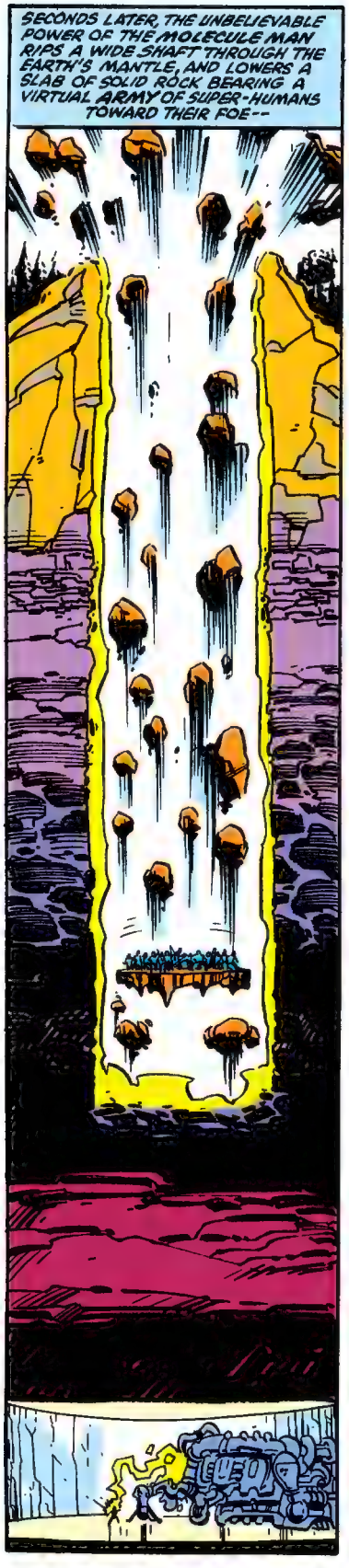

MAGMA, MISTRESS OF GEOTHERMAL HEAT...
THE GROUND--! IT IS ON FIRE!
SHE'S MAKING A MINIATURE VOLCANIC ERUPTION--!

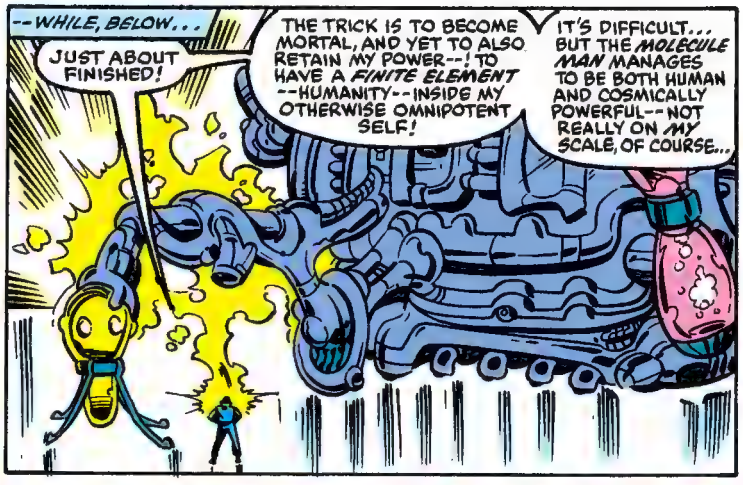

MAGIK, WIELDING HER EXTRA-DIMENSIONAL SOULSWORD...
HO! THIS LITTLE SWORD-MAIDEN SWINGS THE BLADE WELL, CAPTAIN AMERICA!
SHE'S DANGEROUS, ALL RIGHT, THOR--! BUT YOU, ME AND THE BLACK KNIGHT SHOULD BE ABLE TO DISARM HER WITHOUT HURTING HER!
HOW COME WE'RE GIVING GROUND, THEN?

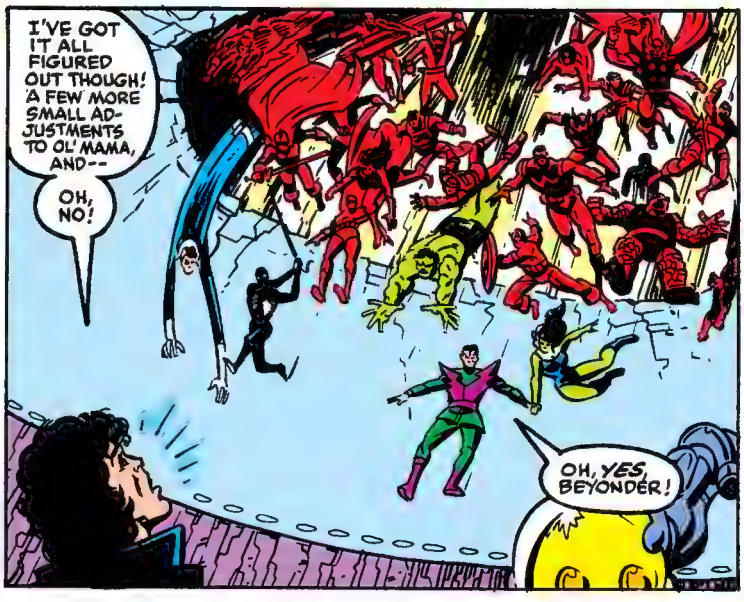
MIRAGE, CREATOR OF TERRIFYING ILLUSIONS TORN FROM HER VICTIMS' DARKEST FEARS--
--AND KARMA, WHO CAN POSSESS OTHERS...
THIS ONE IS THE GREATEST DANGER! IT WILL TAKE BOTH OF US TO OVERCOME HER!
FIRST I WILL WEAKEN HER!

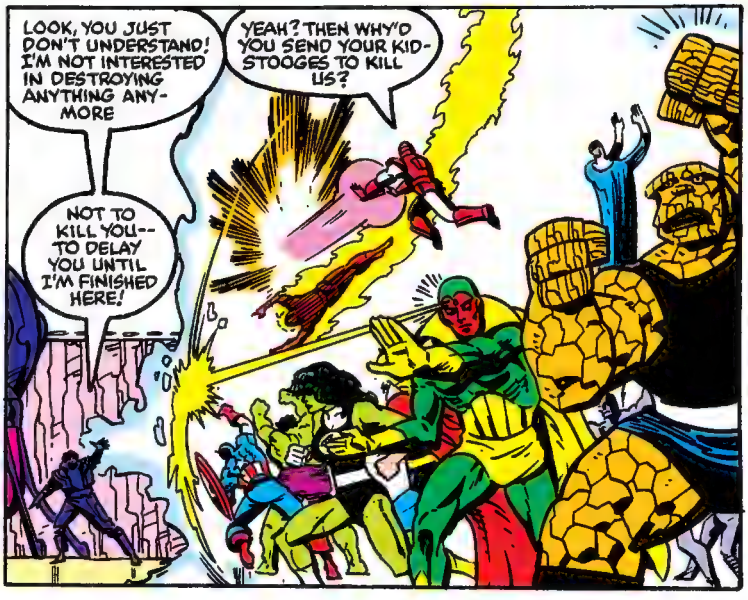

WITHOUT WARNING, RACHEL SUMMERS'S OWN AWESOME POWER, THE POWER OF THE PHOENIX, SEEMS TO TURN AGAINST HER--
--THREATENING TO CONSUME HER!
THEN, IN THE MIDST OF HER FEAR AND CONFUSION, PHOENIX FEELS THE MIND OF ANOTHER TOUCH HERS--
--AND VIE FOR CONTROL OVER HER BODY!
NEARBY...
NOTHING HURTS THIS GUY!
HE MUST HAVE LIMITS! HIT HIM ALL AT ONCE!
WHAM!
UFFF!
THOOM!
BINGO!
BAM!
AND...
STOP SQUIRMIN', FLEABAIT! YER LITTLE CLAWS CAN'T SCRATCH MY UGLY HIDE!
THING, NOW BE NICE! HAVEN'T YOU HEARD--? IT'S "NATIONAL TAKE A FURRY PERSON TO LUNCH DAY"!
IS THAT SO, WASP? GET ME A NICE MOUSIE AND A DISH OF MILK, WILLYA, HAWKEYE?
STARVE, PUSS!
MEANWHILE...
NO HEAT OR FLAME CAN DETER THE VISION! I CAN RENDER MY BODY INTANGIBLE, PASS UNHARMED THROUGH HER LAVA FLOWS, AND STRIKE BACK WITH A BURST OF SOLAR ENERGY!
SILVER SURFER--! I'VE STUNNED HER!
I'LL IMMOBILIZE HER AND REVERT HER TO HUMAN FORM WITH THE POWER COSMIC THAT IS MINE!

AND... ANYTHING OF METAL, ANYTHING CONTROLLED BY ELECTRICAL IMPULSES CAN BE SUBDUED BY THE MASTER OF MAGNETISM!
HE'S HELPLESS, NOW, COLOSSUS! SEIZE HIM!
DA, MAGNETO!
ONLY THESE TWO REMAIN! THEY SEEM TO HOLD THE WOMAN RACHEL IN SOME KIND OF MENTAL POWER!
NOT FOR LONG! I'LL SNEAK UP ON THEM INVISIBLY...
TAKE HER, DAGGER! FELL HER WITH YOUR BLADES OF PUREST LIGHT!
I'LL ONLY STUN HER, CLOAK!
LOOK! THE OTHER ONE FALLS TOO!
BECAUSE I'VE CUT OFF HER AIR WITH AN INVISIBLE FORCE-SHIELD!
THE SCARLET WITCH ISN'T BEING LEFT OUT OF THIS! I'M DISRUPTING WHATEVER ENERGIES THEY WERE USING AGAINST RACHEL WITH A HEX-BOLT!
SOON, AFTER RACHEL HAS RECOVERED...
HMM...IN THE COURSE OF LIBERATING THESE CHILDREN'S MINDS FROM THE BEYONDER'S POWER, I'VE LEARNED WHO THEY ARE!
THEY ARE THE NEW MUTANTS--STUDENTS AT THE X-MEN'S SCHOOL! THEY WERE DESTROYED BY THE BEYONDER AND ERASED FROM ALL LIVING MEMORY...
SOMEHOW HE RECREATED THEM, IN THIS ZOMBIE-LIKE STATE, TO USE AS PAWNS AGAINST US!
LATER, I'LL TRY TO UNDO THE DAMAGE HE'S DONE TO THEIR MINDS! FOR NOW, I CARE ONLY ABOUT MAKING THE BEYONDER PAY!
SO LET'S GO GET 'IM!

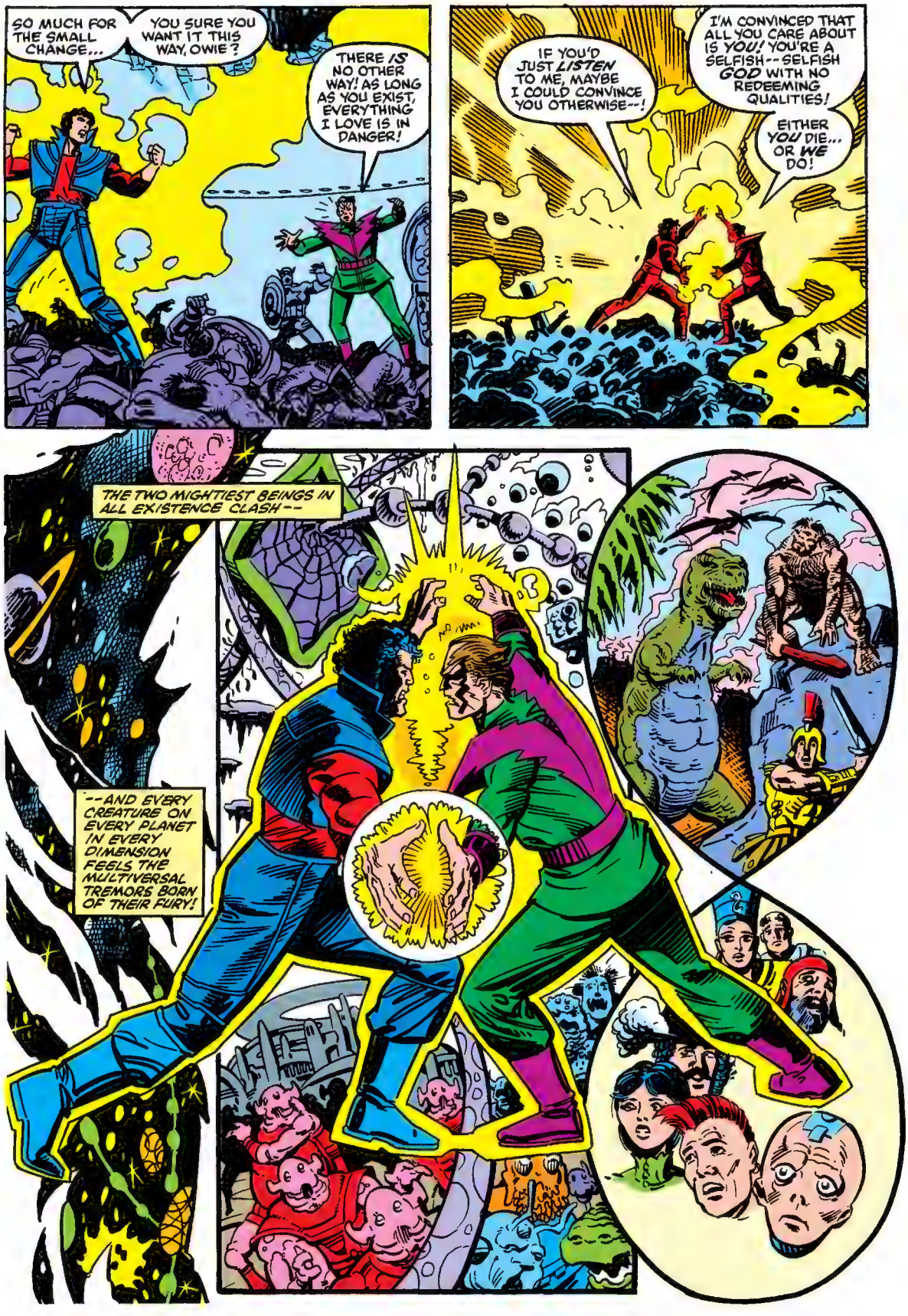

SECONDS LATER, THE UNBELIEVABLE POWER OF THE MOLECULE MAN RIPS A WIDE SHAFT THROUGH THE EARTH'S MANTLE, AND LOWERS A SLAB OF SOLID ROCK BEARING A VIRTUAL ARMY OF SUPER-HUMANS TOWARD THEIR FOE--

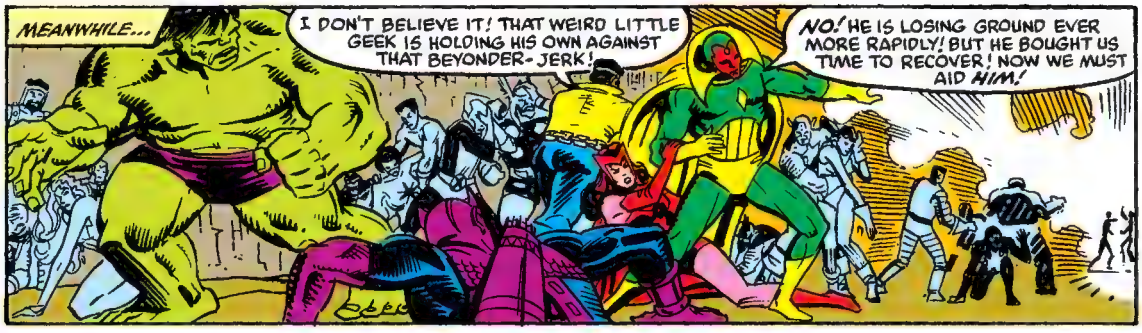

--WHILE, BELOW...
JUST ABOUT FINISHED!
THE TRICK IS TO BECOME MORTAL, AND YET TO ALSO RETAIN MY POWER--! TO HAVE A FINITE ELEMENT --HUMANITY--INSIDE MY OTHERWISE OMNIPOTENT SELF!
IT'S DIFFICULT... BUT THE MOLECULE MAN MANAGES TO BE BOTH HUMAN AND COSMICALLY POWERFUL--NOT REALLY ON MY SCALE, OF COURSE...


I'VE GOT IT ALL FIGURED OUT THOUGH! A FEW MORE SMALL ADJUSTMENTS TO OL' MAMA, AND--
OH, NO!
OH, YES, BEYONDER!

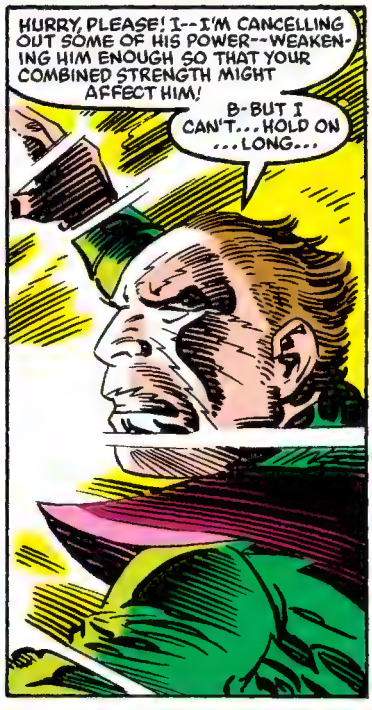

LOOK, YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND! I'M NOT INTERESTED IN DESTROYING ANYTHING ANYMORE
YEAH? THEN WHY'D YOU SEND YOUR KID-STOOGES TO KILL US?
NOT TO KILL YOU--TO DELAY YOU UNTIL I'M FINISHED HERE!

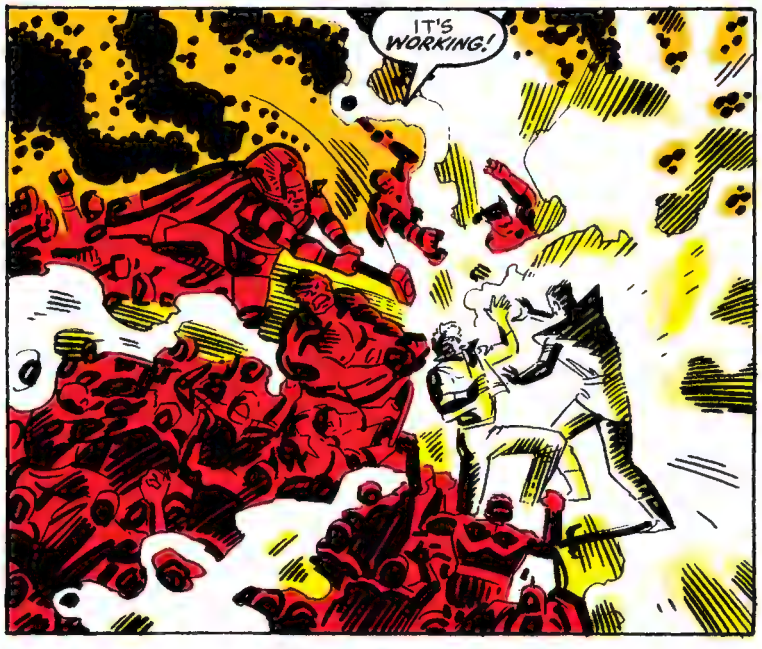
NOTHING'S GOING TO DELAY US...OR STOP US!
RATS! I SHOULD HAVE MADE THAT BARRIER STRONGER!
KABASHH!
I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU!
GOOD! HOLD STILL WHILE I CARVE YOU UP!
THIS IS INEVITABLE, ISN'T IT? IF I TELE-PORT MY-SELF AND MY MACHINE ELSEWHERE, YOU'D JUST FOLLOW WITH OWIE'S HELP!
AND FORCIBLY "ADJUSTING" YOUR ATTITUDES WOULD PROBABLY BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN SUB-DUING YOU--YOU'RE ALL SUCH BUTT-HEADS!
ALL RIGHT THEN, SO BE IT!
THBOOM!

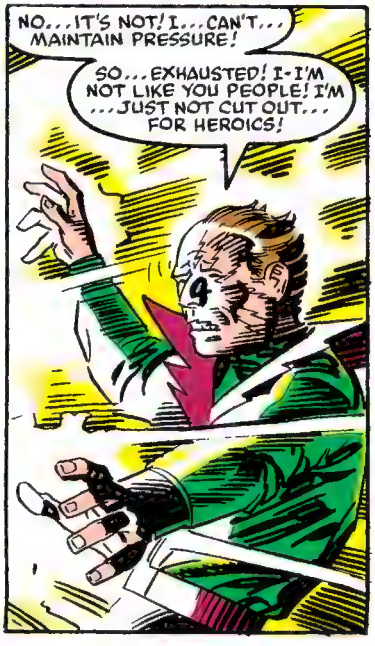

SO MUCH FOR THE SMALL CHANGE...
YOU SURE YOU WANT IT THIS WAY, OWIE?
THERE IS NO OTHER WAY! AS LONG AS YOU EXIST, EVERYTHING I LOVE IS IN DANGER!
IF YOU'D JUST LISTEN TO ME, MAYBE I COULD CONVINCE YOU OTHERWISE--!
I'M CONVINCED THAT ALL YOU CARE ABOUT IS YOU! YOU'RE A SELFISH--SELFISH GOD WITH NO REDEEMING QUALITIES!
EITHER YOU DIE... OR WE DO!
THE TWO MIGHTIEST BEINGS IN ALL EXISTENCE CLASH--
--AND EVERY CREATURE ON EVERY PLANET IN EVERY DIMENSION FEELS THE MULTIVERSAL TREMORS BORN OF THEIR FURY!

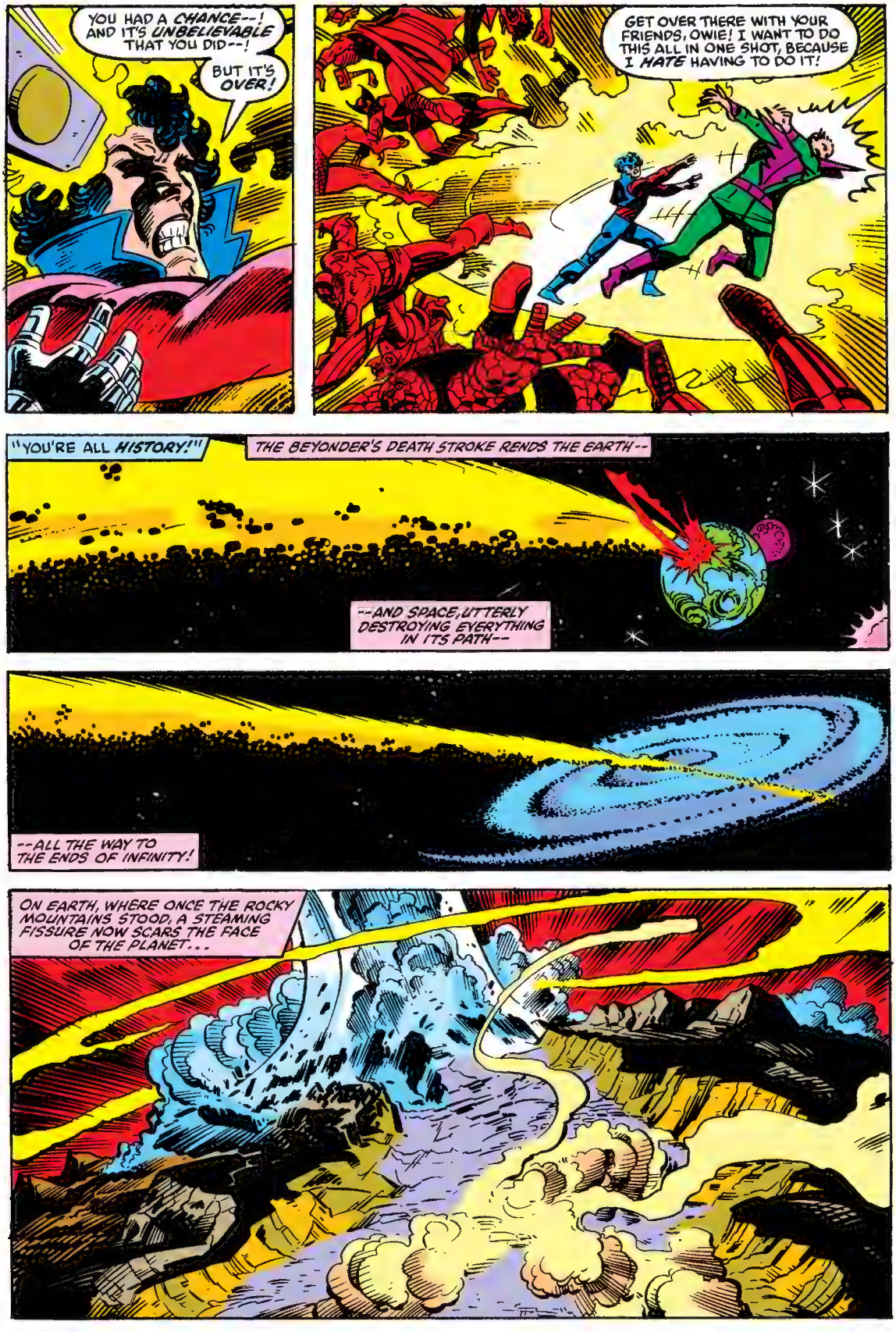

MEANWHILE...
I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THAT WEIRD LITTLE GEEK IS HOLDING HIS OWN AGAINST THAT BEYONDER-JERK!
NO! HE IS LOSING GROUND EVER MORE RAPIDLY! BUT HE BOUGHT US TIME TO RECOVER! NOW WE MUST AID HIM!

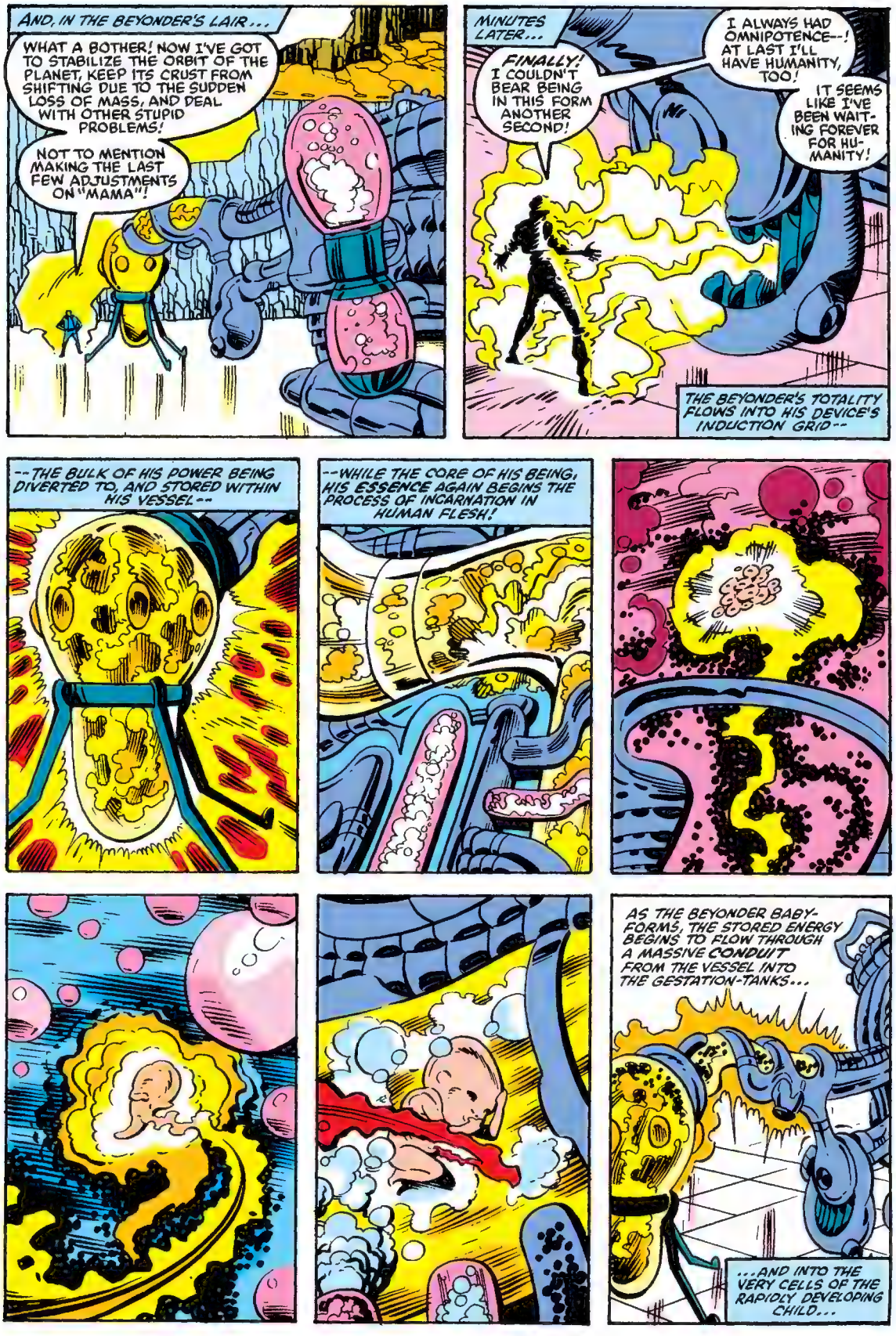
FOR ASGARD--! FOR LIFE ITSELF!
ALL AT ONCE! PILE ON!
THUDDOOH!

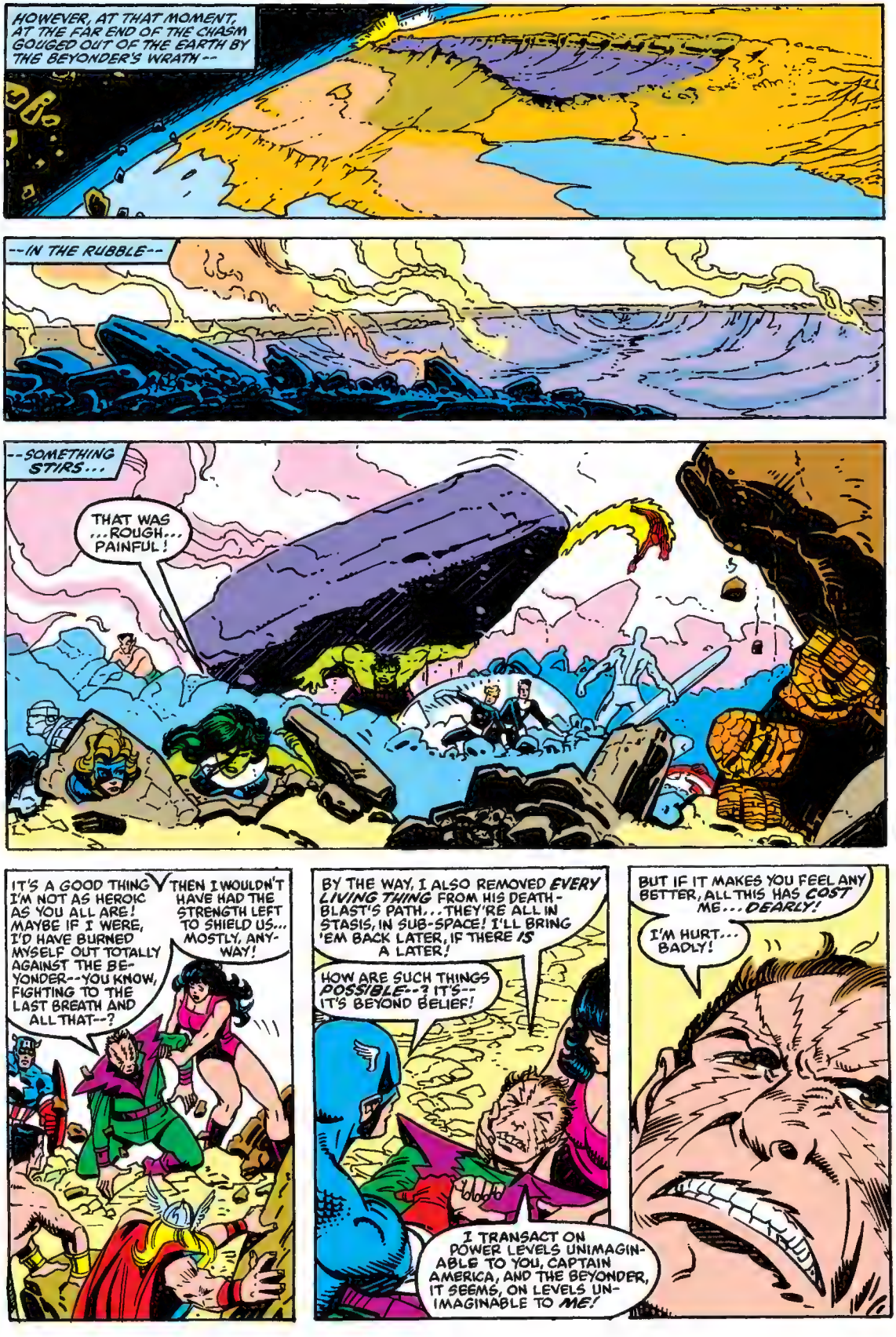

HURRY, PLEASE! I--I'M CANCELLING OUT SOME OF HIS POWER--WEAKENING HIM ENOUGH SO THAT YOUR COMBINED STRENGTH MIGHT AFFECT HIM!
B-BUT I CAN'T... HOLD ON ...LONG...

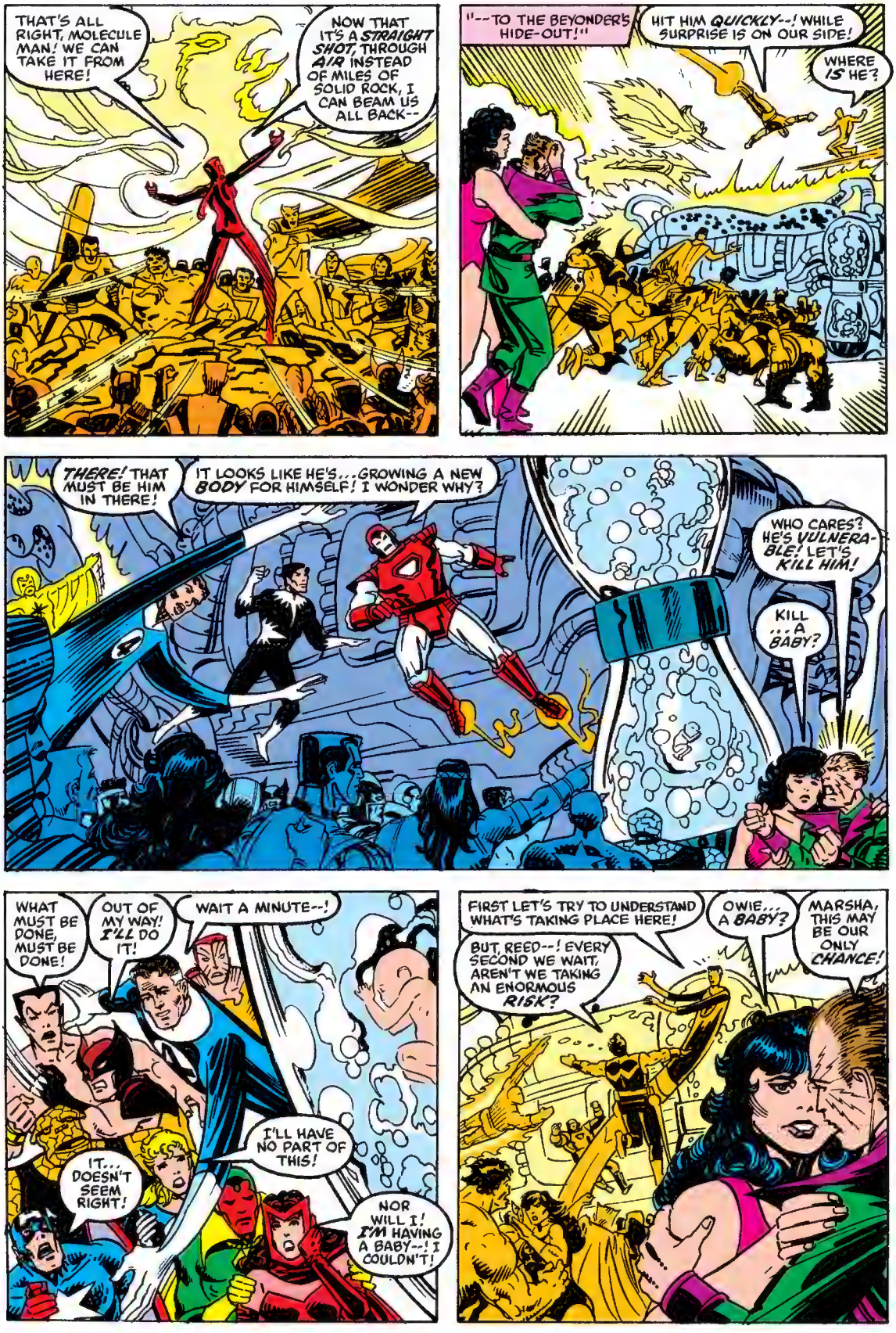

IT'S WORKING!

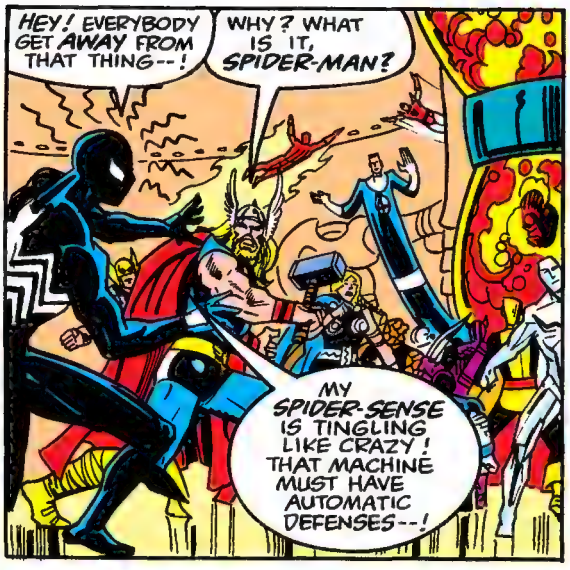

NO... IT'S NOT! I... CAN'T... MAINTAIN PRESSURE!
SO... EXHAUSTED! I-I'M NOT LIKE YOU PEOPLE! I'M ...JUST NOT CUT OUT... FOR HEROICS!


YOU HAD A CHANCE--! AND IT'S UNBELIEVABLE THAT YOU DID--!
BUT IT'S OVER!
GET OVER THERE WITH YOUR FRIENDS, OWIE! I WANT TO DO THIS ALL IN ONE SHOT, BECAUSE I HATE HAVING TO DO IT!
"YOU'RE ALL HISTORY!"
THE BEYONDER'S DEATH STROKE RENDS THE EARTH--
--AND SPACE, UTTERLY DESTROYING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH--
--ALL THE WAY TO THE ENDS OF INFINITY!
ON EARTH, WHERE ONCE THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS STOOD, A STEAMING FISSURE NOW SCARS THE FACE OF THE PLANET...

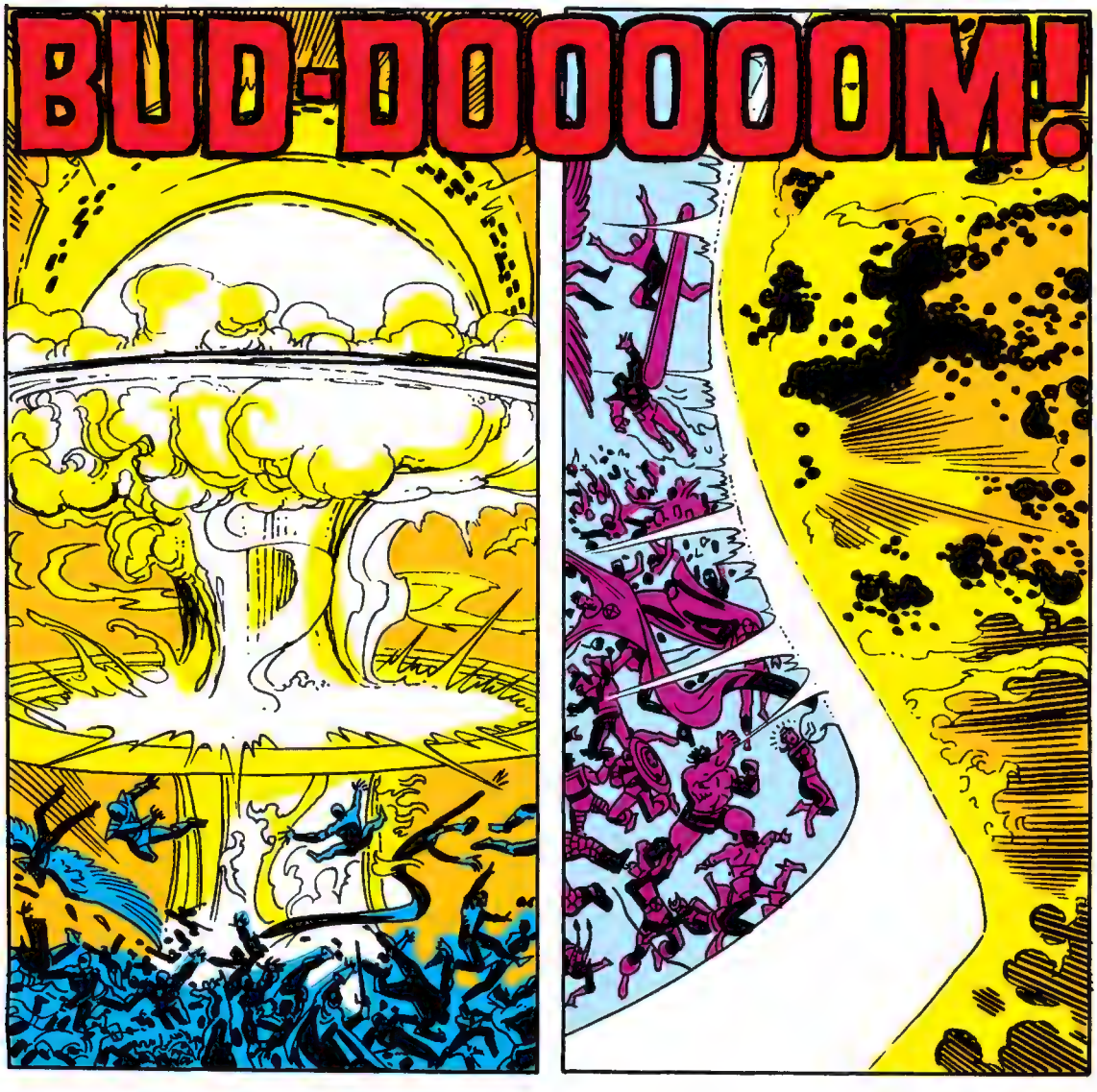

AND, IN THE BEYONDER'S LAIR...
WHAT A BOTHER! NOW I'VE GOT TO STABILIZE THE ORBIT OF THE PLANET, KEEP ITS CRUST FROM SHIFTING DUE TO THE SUDDEN LOSS OF MASS, AND DEAL WITH OTHER STUPID PROBLEMS!
NOT TO MENTION MAKING THE LAST FEW ADJUSTMENTS ON "MAMA"!
MINUTES LATER...
FINALLY! I COULDN'T BEAR BEING IN THIS FORM ANOTHER SECOND!
I ALWAYS HAD OMNIPOTENCE--! AT LAST I'LL HAVE HUMANITY, TOO!
IT SEEMS LIKE I'VE BEEN WAITING FOREVER FOR HUMANITY!
THE BEYONDER'S TOTALITY FLOWS INTO HIS DEVICE'S INDUCTION GRID--
--THE BULK OF HIS POWER BEING DIVERTED TO, AND STORED WITHIN HIS VESSEL--
--WHILE THE CORE OF HIS BEING, HIS ESSENCE AGAIN BEGINS THE PROCESS OF INCARNATION IN HUMAN FLESH!
AS THE BEYONDER BABY-FORMS, THE STORED ENERGY BEGINS TO FLOW THROUGH A MASSIVE CONDUIT FROM THE VESSEL INTO THE GESTATION-TANKS...
...AND INTO THE VERY CELLS OF THE RAPIDLY DEVELOPING CHILD...


HOWEVER, AT THAT MOMENT, AT THE FAR END OF THE CHASM GOUGED OUT OF THE EARTH BY THE BEYONDER'S WRATH --
--IN THE RUBBLE--
--SOMETHING STIRS...
THAT WAS ...ROUGH... PAINFUL!
IT'S A GOOD THING I'M NOT AS HEROIC AS YOU ALL ARE! MAYBE IF I WERE, I'D HAVE BURNED MYSELF OUT TOTALLY AGAINST THE BEYONDER--YOU KNOW, FIGHTING TO THE LAST BREATH AND ALL THAT--?
THEN I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD THE STRENGTH LEFT TO SHIELD US... MOSTLY, ANYWAY!
BY THE WAY, I ALSO REMOVED EVERY LIVING THING FROM HIS DEATH-BLAST'S PATH...THEY'RE ALL IN STASIS, IN SUB-SPACE! I'LL BRING 'EM BACK LATER, IF THERE IS A LATER!
HOW ARE SUCH THINGS POSSIBLE--? IT'S-- IT'S BEYOND BELIEF!
I TRANSACT ON POWER LEVELS UNIMAGINABLE TO YOU, CAPTAIN AMERICA, AND THE BEYONDER, IT SEEMS, ON LEVELS UNIMAGINABLE TO ME!
BUT IF IT MAKES YOU FEEL ANY BETTER, ALL THIS HAS COST ME... DEARLY!
I'M HURT... BADLY!

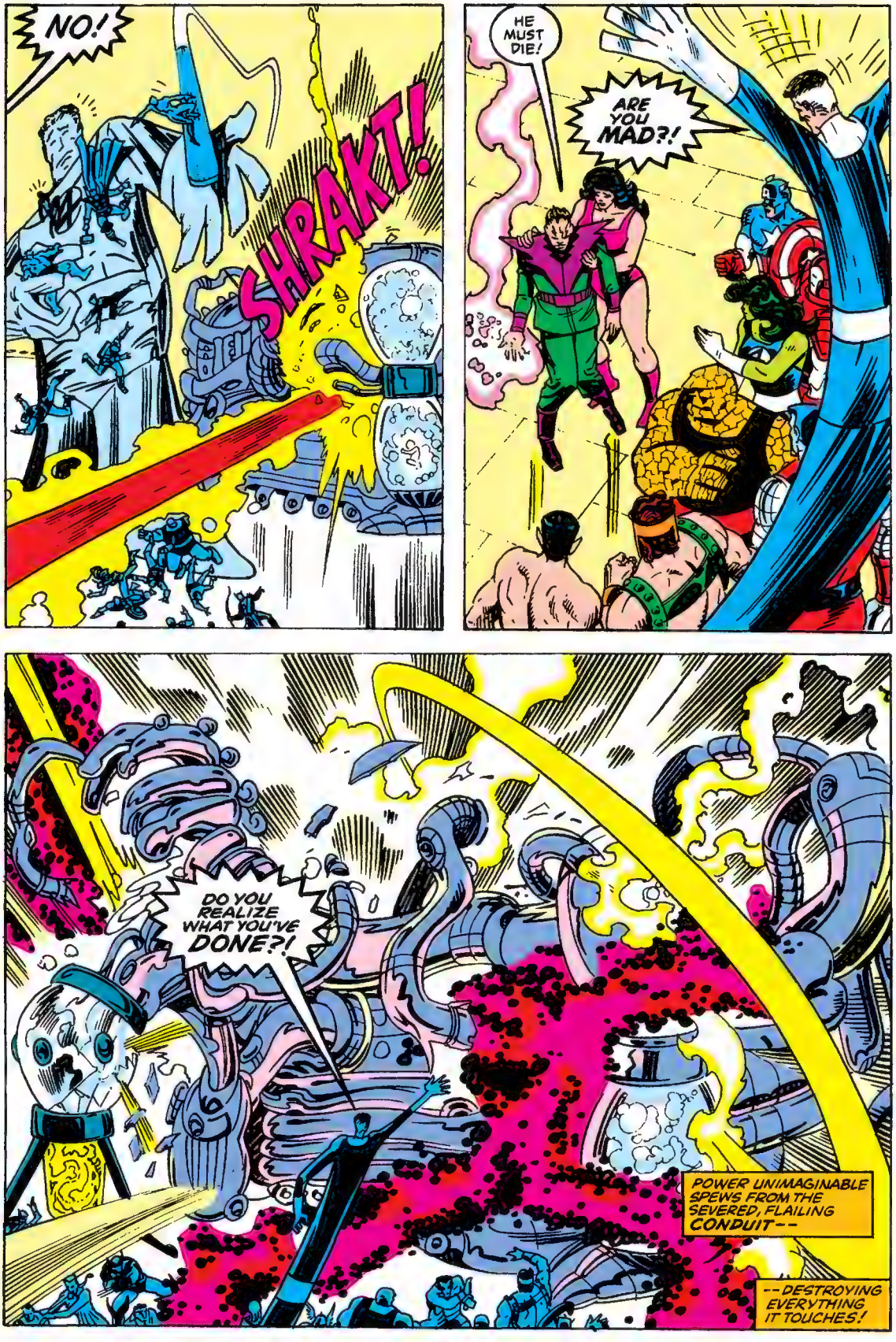

THAT'S ALL RIGHT, MOLECULE MAN! WE CAN TAKE IT FROM HERE!
NOW THAT IT'S A STRAIGHT SHOT, THROUGH AIR INSTEAD OF MILES OF SOLID ROCK, I CAN BEAM US ALL BACK--
"--TO THE BEYONDER'S HIDE-OUT!"
HIT HIM QUICKLY--! WHILE SURPRISE IS ON OUR SIDE!
WHERE IS HE?
THERE! THAT MUST BE HIM IN THERE!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S...GROWING A NEW BODY FOR HIMSELF! I WONDER WHY?
WHO CARES? HE'S VULNERABLE! LET'S KILL HIM!
KILL ...A BABY?
WHAT MUST BE DONE, MUST BE DONE!
OUT OF MY WAY! I'LL DO IT!
WAIT A MINUTE--!
I'LL HAVE NO PART OF THIS!
IT... DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT!
NOR WILL I! I'M HAVING A BABY--! I COULDN'T!
FIRST LET'S TRY TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S TAKING PLACE HERE!
BUT, REED--! EVERY SECOND WE WAIT, AREN'T WE TAKING AN ENORMOUS RISK?
OWIE... A BABY?
MARSHA, THIS MAY BE OUR ONLY CHANCE!

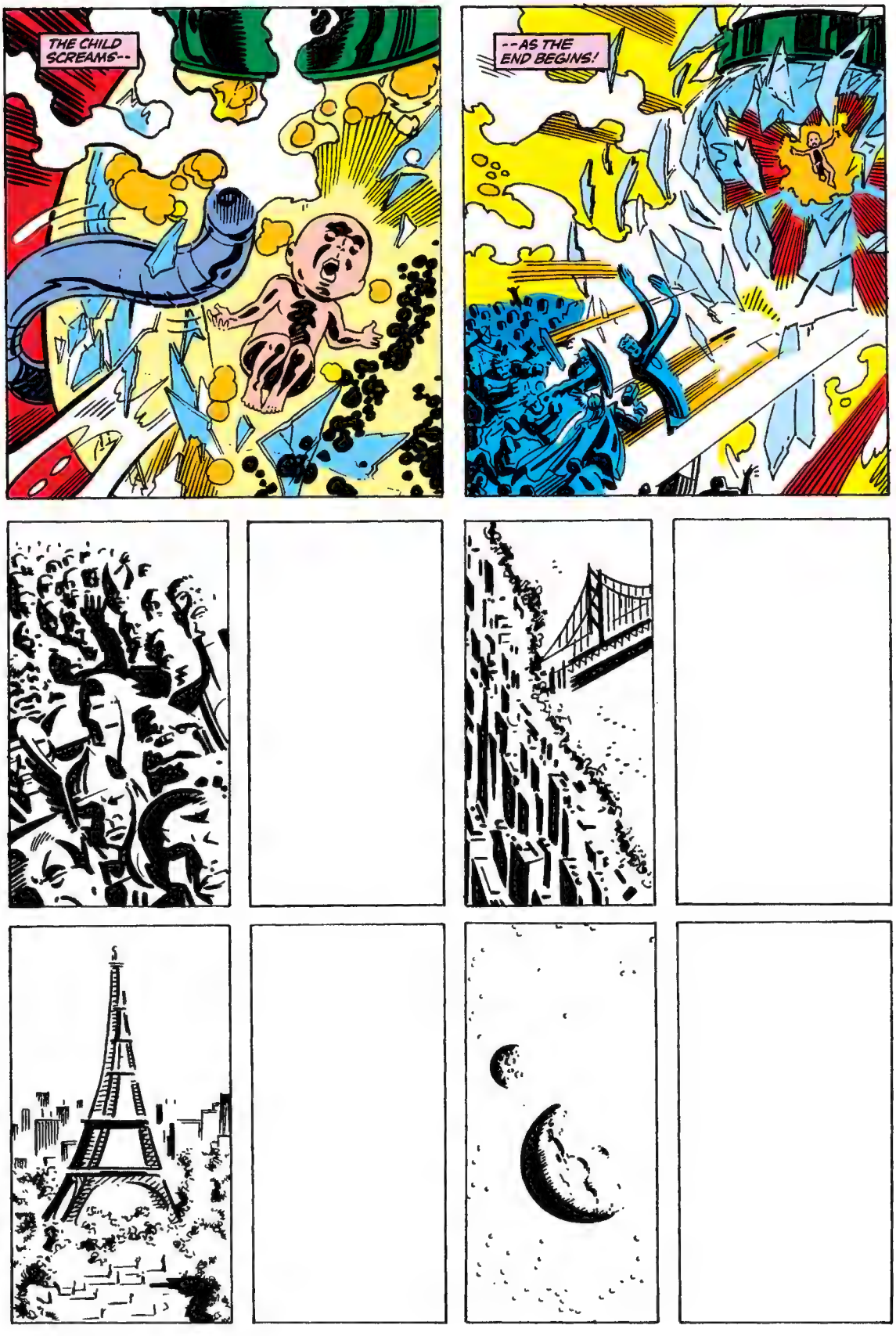

HEY! EVERYBODY GET AWAY FROM THAT THING--!
WHY? WHAT IS IT, SPIDER-MAN?
MY SPIDER-SENSE IS TINGLING LIKE CRAZY! THAT MACHINE MUST HAVE AUTOMATIC DEFENSES--!

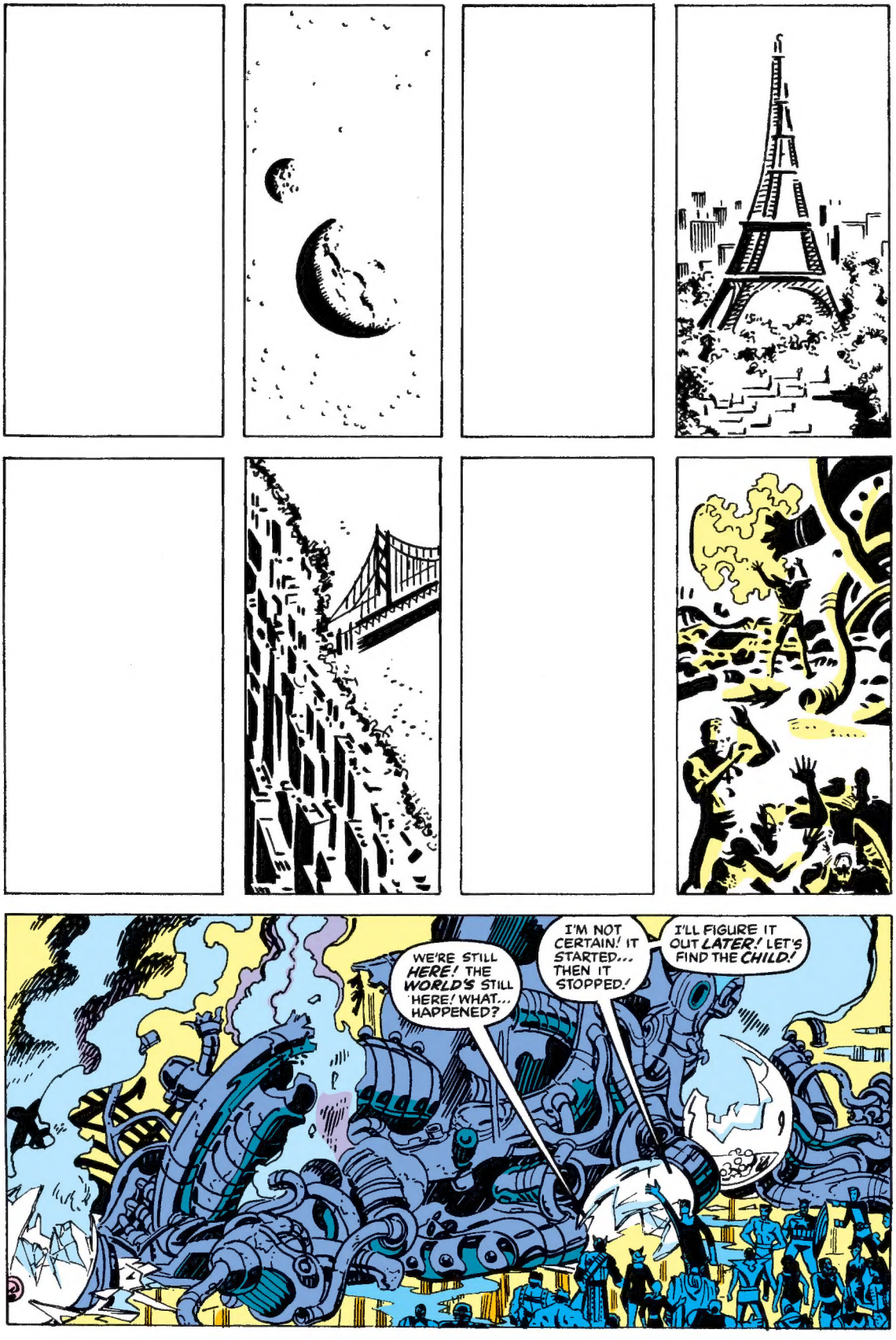
THAT GLOW--! SOMETHING'S HAPPENING!
TAKE COVER!

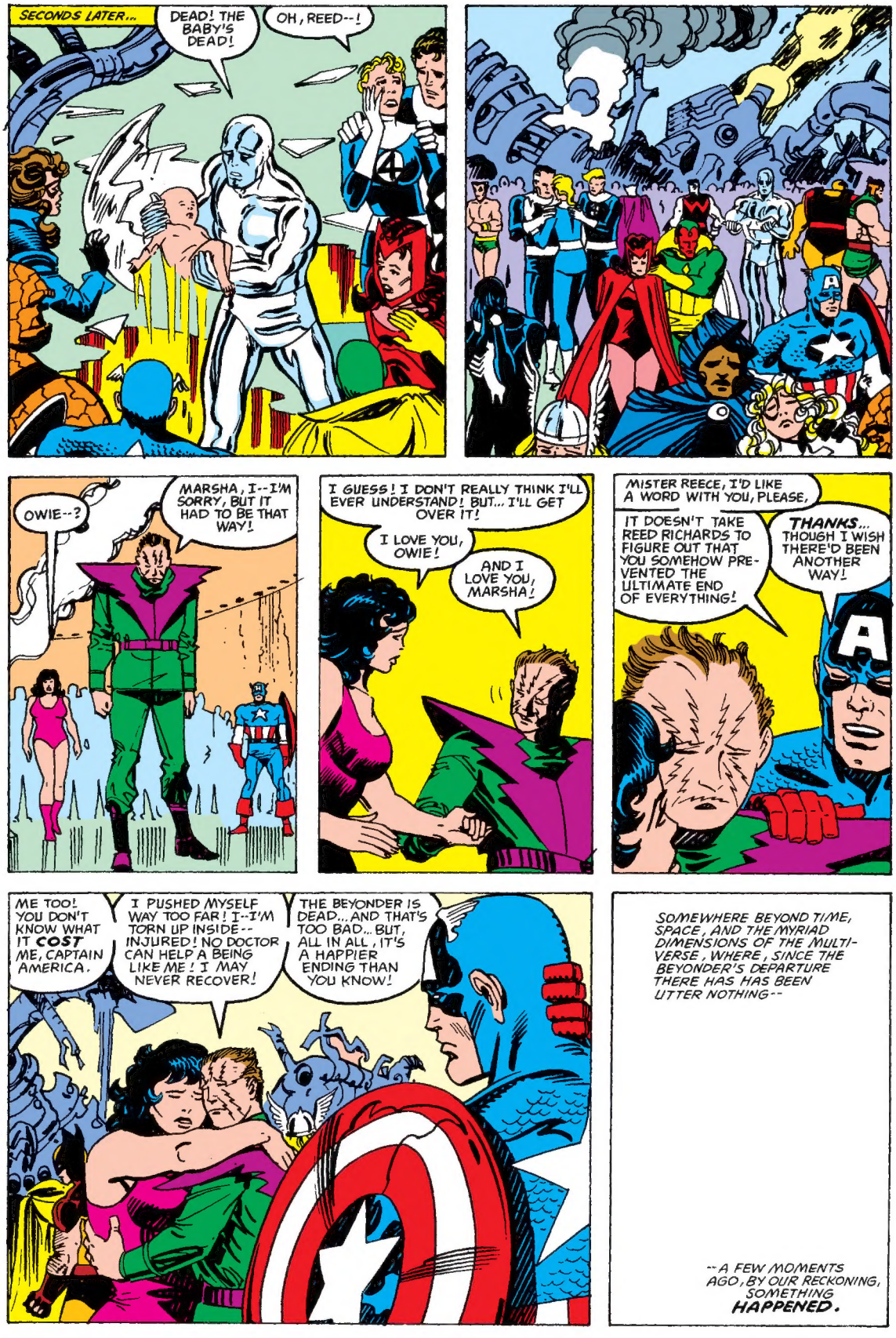

BUD-DOOOOOM!

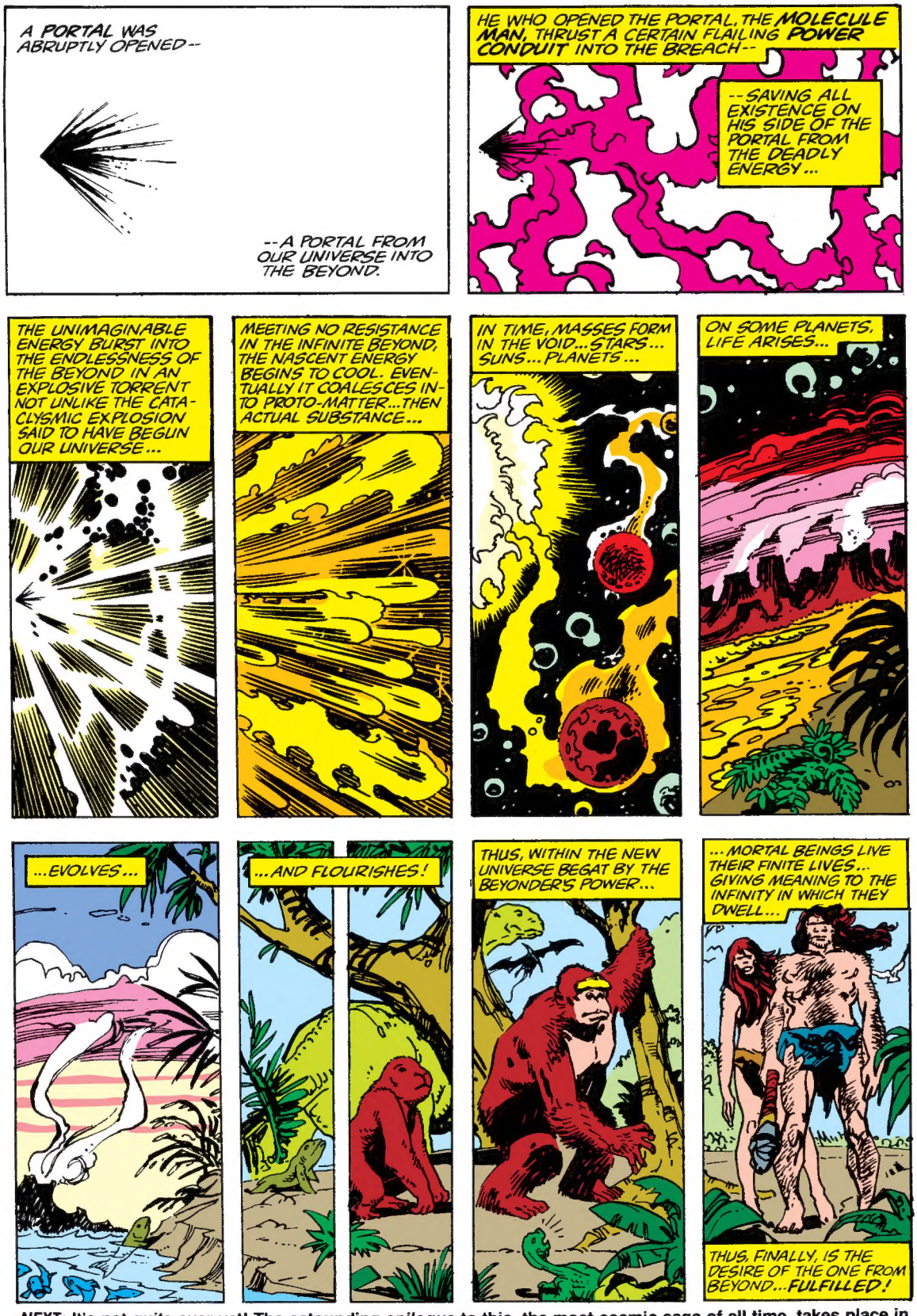
ACCORDING TO MY BUILT-IN SENSORS, THE BLAST THAT MACHINE HURLED AT US WAS ROUGHLY EQUIVALENT TO A LARGE NUKE! WE SHOULD ALL BE DEAD!
I SURMISE THAT, THANKS TO SPIDER-MAN'S WARNING, THE INVISIBLE WOMAN WAS ABLE TO ERECT AN INVISIBLE WALL OF FORCE TO PROTECT US, IRON MAN!
NO DOUBT SHE WAS AIDED SOMEWHAT BY RACHEL, AND THE SILVER SURFER -- BUT IT SEEMS THAT SHE TOOK THE BRUNT!
SUE!
SHE PASSED OUT -- BUT SHE'S OKAY, I -- I THINK!
THAT DOES IT!
LET'S TEAR THAT MACHINE DOWN!
NO! WAIT! WE CAN'T!
COME ON, REED! THAT THING JUST HURT YOUR WIFE -- NOT TO MENTION IT ALMOST KILLED US ALL!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! NOT ONLY IS THERE A CHILD BEING FORMED IN THERE, A LIVING BEING WHO MIGHT DIE IF WE TAMPER WITH ITS PRENATAL PROCESS --
-- BUT THE POWER CONTAINED IN THAT DEVICE IS THE POWER OF THE BEYONDER!
IF WE SMASH THE MACHINE AND THAT INCREDIBLE ENERGY IS LOOSED, IT COULD DESTROY EVERYTHING, EVERYWHERE, IN ONE BLINDING WHITE FLASH!
THERE'S NO SAFE WAY TO INTERRUPT THE PROCESS! WE'VE GOT TO LET THE GESTATION AND BIRTH PROCESS CONTINUE -- AND TRY TO REASON WITH THE NEO-BEYONDER WHO EMERGES!


NO!
SHRAKT!
HE MUST DIE!
ARE YOU MAD?!
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'VE DONE?!
POWER UNIMAGINABLE SPEWS FROM THE SEVERED, FLAILING CONDUIT--
--DESTROYING EVERYTHING IT TOUCHES!


THE CHILD SCREAMS--
--AS THE END BEGINS!


WE'RE STILL HERE! THE WORLD'S STILL HERE! WHAT... HAPPENED?
I'M NOT CERTAIN! IT STARTED... THEN IT STOPPED!
I'LL FIGURE IT OUT LATER! LET'S FIND THE CHILD!


SECONDS LATER...
DEAD! THE BABY'S DEAD!
OH, REED--!
OWIE--?
MARSHA, I--I'M SORRY, BUT IT HAD TO BE THAT WAY!
I GUESS! I DON'T REALLY THINK I'LL EVER UNDERSTAND! BUT... I'LL GET OVER IT!
I LOVE YOU, OWIE!
AND I LOVE YOU, MARSHA!
MISTER REECE, I'D LIKE A WORD WITH YOU, PLEASE.
IT DOESN'T TAKE REED RICHARDS TO FIGURE OUT THAT YOU SOMEHOW PREVENTED THE ULTIMATE END OF EVERYTHING!
THANKS... THOUGH I WISH THERE'D BEEN ANOTHER WAY!
ME TOO! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT COST ME, CAPTAIN AMERICA.
I PUSHED MYSELF WAY TOO FAR! I--I'M TORN UP INSIDE--INJURED! NO DOCTOR CAN HELP A BEING LIKE ME! I MAY NEVER RECOVER!
THE BEYONDER IS DEAD... AND THAT'S TOO BAD... BUT, ALL IN ALL, IT'S A HAPPIER ENDING THAN YOU KNOW!
SOMEWHERE BEYOND TIME, SPACE, AND THE MYRIAD DIMENSIONS OF THE MULTI-VERSE, WHERE, SINCE THE BEYONDER'S DEPARTURE THERE HAS HAS BEEN UTTER NOTHING--
--A FEW MOMENTS AGO, BY OUR RECKONING, SOMETHING HAPPENED.


A PORTAL WAS ABRUPTLY OPENED--
--A PORTAL FROM OUR UNIVERSE INTO THE BEYOND.
HE WHO OPENED THE PORTAL, THE MOLECULE MAN, THRUST A CERTAIN FLAILING POWER CONDUIT INTO THE BREACH--
--SAVING ALL EXISTENCE ON HIS SIDE OF THE PORTAL FROM THE DEADLY ENERGY...
THE UNIMAGINABLE ENERGY BURST INTO THE ENDLESSNESS OF THE BEYOND IN AN EXPLOSIVE TORRENT NOT UNLIKE THE CATACLYSMIC EXPLOSION SAID TO HAVE BEGUN OUR UNIVERSE...
MEETING NO RESISTANCE IN THE INFINITE BEYOND, THE NASCENT ENERGY BEGINS TO COOL. EVENTUALLY IT COALESCES INTO PROTO-MATTER...THEN ACTUAL SUBSTANCE...
IN TIME, MASSES FORM IN THE VOID...STARS... SUNS... PLANETS...
ON SOME PLANETS, LIFE ARISES...
...EVOLVES...
...AND FLOURISHES!
THUS, WITHIN THE NEW UNIVERSE BEGAT BY THE BEYONDER'S POWER...
...MORTAL BEINGS LIVE THEIR FINITE LIVES... GIVING MEANING TO THE INFINITY IN WHICH THEY DWELL...
THUS, FINALLY, IS THE DESIRE OF THE ONE FROM BEYOND...FULFILLED!

NEXT: It's not *quite* over yet! The astounding *epilogue* to this, the most cosmic saga of all time, takes place in *Avengers* #266, on sale January. Do not miss . . . "...AND THE WAR'S DESOLATION!"

MINUTEMEN
Blutman